



COCK'N'KABUL STORY

HOW THE PLAN TO DEVASTATE AND THEN 'RECONSTRUCT' AFGHANISTAN IS PAYING DIVIDENDS

This week the 100th soldier was killed since (illegal) British operations began in Afghanistan more than six years ago." They have paid the ultimate price" said Gordon Brown, "but they have achieved something of lasting value." Shareholder value that is - with most of the 'aid' / reconstruction cash going to a small number of corporate contractors for overpriced and shoddy work.

It's considered legitimate for a corporation to make huge profits if its prepared to invest in a warzone. Its all about 'rewarding risk' and entrepreneurial prowess - War is an attractive proposition for right-wing money men and ex-army / militia thug types. £8bn in reconstruction money (almost all of it from the U.S) has been spent so far and, on average, each contract awarded to the private sector costs four times more than if it was run by the Afghan government. It costs, for example, £6,000 to build a classroom under a government run contract - but US corporations are building the same schools with the same sub contractors for more than 25 grand a piece. Half of all aid is actually spent outside of the country. At the same time the average resident of Kabul will be lucky to get more than six hours of electricity a day.

Most of the loot is being sucked up by reconstruction which runs over-budget. And since there's no one's checking the cashflow that comes as hardly a surprise. On average international 'donors' are spending three quarters of their 'aid' on privately run projects with no government oversight. Although the State Department does not gather the statistics because (says a spokesman) the figures are "not important to us" - it is estimated that only 3% of US aid is given to the Afghan government. The rest goes to the corporations that are so closely tied to (and sponsor) the Bush administration.

It was never the invading powers' intention for their governments to pay for the reconstruction themselves - they'd be leaving that to the US and UK taxpayers. Using their leverage and influence to snap up lucrative investments and non-exec positions with the same companies bankrolling the political class help them all pick up this bountiful tax income through reconstruction, security and 'advice' contracts. Any shares in the corporations that win contracts can be packaged in a variety of 'financial instruments' (e.g. offshore trust funds) so the voter need never know that their politi-

cal representative is making a fortune.

And if you're vice President and former Chief Executive Officer of Halliburton, like Dick Cheney, then you can simply operate under a subsidiary name - Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) in this case. And what a nice little earner that's turning out to be. KBR picked up a £50 million contract from the State Department back in 2002 to build a new embassy in Kabul. The company has since been awarded further contracts worth £115 million. Mindful of all the bad PR, Cheney left Halliburton in August 2000, promising to sever all financial ties to the company. A few stock options later and Dick was £20 million better off. But he still pockets anything between £100,000 and £1/2 million each year in 'deferred compensation' showing that he continues to profit from the war he made the decision to wage.

Afghanistan's Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program has been bankrolled by USAID (the government agency awarding contracts), with more than £25 million a year going to Chemonics International to persuade Afghans to adopt the more profitable western approach to growing food. Chemonics is the the knowledge economy game where it receives hefty fees to 'advise' governments. Ninety percent of its cash comes through USAID - where its controlling owner, Scott Spangler, used to work as director under papa Bush.

The Price is Right

To help make the loot flow in the right direction, between 1990 and 2003 the Spangler family gave the republican party £50,000 - and now they want to see a return for their investment. Despite Chemonics best efforts a country once more than self sufficient in food now sees half the population go hungry.

Another option is to obtain a valuable contract - in security for example - and sub contract it out to the locals for a nice fee. Private security firm, United States Protection and Investigations, charges £2,500 a month for a security team of six. But when western security forces charge more than £1,000 a day, its so much cheaper to pay an Afghani security worker who only commands £60 a month. With six employees costing just £360 - 80% of the money is straight profit. In fact even the World Bank director in Kabul, Jean Mazurelle, estimates that 35 to 40 percent of all international aid sent to

Afghanistan is "badly spent."

The consequences of inaction on locally-led development are clear. While Brown talks of an 'historic mission', Afghans are wondering where all the promised assistance has gone. Corruption in government and blatant profiteering by western corporations is only serving to alienate a population which then turns against those responsible for the abuses - be they warlords, government officials or the international forces that support them.

For more info on the recent rise of private military companies, check out Jeremy Scahill www.alternet.org/authors/5434

*** More than one in five of the 100 soldiers killed since November 2001 were not caused by enemy fire - but accidents.** The statistics are a little skewed when the crash of an aging Nimrod spy plane killed all 14 crew. Nevertheless of the 201 British soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan more than 80 died because of accidents. Oops.

NO BUSH OVER

Bush's farewell tour of the EU haven't been greeted with the same mass protests of his previous jaunts this side of the pond - a mere 1000 marched against him in Rome.

With his term of power nearly over perhaps he just isn't worth the effort. Nevertheless, British police are still just as keen to make sure he doesn't see the opposition as they were the last time he met the Queen.

Police have attempted to ban a Stop the War coalition march on Downing St this Sunday 15th. Although they've allowed a gathering at Trafalgar Square they want to stop the march going any further.

Apart from the official Trotskyist demos (see below) there will be no doubt be plenty of the autonomous shenanigans that took place the last time Bush graced us with his presence back in 2003 (see SchNews 432)

NO AFTERNOON TEA FOR WAR CRIMINALS

Demo Sunday 15 June. Assemble 1.30pm at Windsor & Eton Riverside Train Station. March to King Henry VIII Gate, Castle Hill.

BUSH NOT WELCOME HERE! Defend our right to peaceful protest End UK support for US war policies

Demo Sunday 15 June. Assemble 5.00pm at Parliament Square, London

Bonehead Loonstomp

Anti-fascists have already scored a victory over the BNP's planned "Red White and Blue" festival in Derbyshire. The BNP withdrew their licence application after cops insisted on strict security measures. A solicitor for Derbyshire police told the Amber Valley Borough Council licence tribunal "The fact is we are expecting trouble at this event. We didn't object to this festival in 2007, and we didn't object initially in 2008 - however towards the end of May the intelligence picture changed. We have started to receive intelligence to say that groups opposed to the BNP may attack people attending this festival. Having a large number of individuals with opposing views together in one area like this is going to be a powder keg."

Outside the meeting at Ripley Town Hall, anti-fascists from Nottinghamshire Stop the BNP, Derbyshire Unite Against Fascism and Antifa were held back by police including evidence gatherers and a Forward Intelligence Team.

The police solicitor told the panel that the police would only be happy for the event to get a licence if it came attached with a number of new conditions including the erection of a Glastonbury-style ten-foot high fence around the site, bagged security and the installation of security lighting.

Unsurprisingly, the BNP were less than happy about this and stormed out. John Walker, national treasurer of the BNP, whinged: "We came here with an open mind. As it went on we came to the conclusion that it was becoming a farce because of the hoops we were being asked to jump through by Derbyshire Police. The police have caved in to mob rule. We are going to withdraw this application and this event will go ahead without a licence." That means no booze and no live music, which will leave formation goosestepping and cross burning as the only forms of entertainment at the nationalist shindig. (They are still hoping it will all be all white on the night of course...)

A spokesman for the anti-fascists said "This is crucial. This is clearly a major victory for us and a pain in the arse for the BNP, but it won't stop the festival taking place. If we want to achieve that we're going to have to continue to build the campaign and mobilise for the day of action on Saturday August 16th."

For more info on taking action against the BNP and their white supremacist knees-up check out www.antifa.org.uk and www.nobnppfestival.wordpress.com

HOLE IN THE BUDGET?

With the government planning ten new nuclear reactors, they've come up with a cunning plan to find somewhere to dump all the radioactive waste. Pay communities to bury it! Local councils will soon be able to bid for the right to store it.

Obviously hoping that the promise of filthy lucre will help local councillors ignore any niggling concerns they might have over damage to health and the environment, the winning community can hope to see a boost to their economy (not to mention to the average number of limbs, digits, eyes amongst the locals) with the offer of bribes in the form of "financial support".

With no fail-safe storage for nuclear waste and the fact that it remains dangerous for thousands of years, officials are clearly not anticipating a stampede giving themselves up to ten years to decide on the 'winner'. So if you fancy your town becoming a carcinogenic hotspot, but with a pleasant luminous glow, why not start up a campaign to get a bid in. Or visit www.no2nuclearpower.org.uk - www.nukewatch.com - nonewnukes.ukrivers.net - Greenpeace etc, wise up, and start some nuclear resistance!

PENT UP ANGER

We all know that balancing yer books and keeping your credit in control is tough in these economically shaky times, but you'd think that if anyone could it would be the all powerful give 'em-as-much-as-they-want-anf-then-some US Pentagon. But no, last year they accidentally managed to go over their spending budget - oops, just a slight miscalculation here and there, er, comes to about \$295 billion, sorry Guv! Talk about losing track of a few receipts.

An auditors report released to Congress last week revealed that the US has been involved in the biggest self-arming exercise since WWII. The \$790 billion promised to merchants of death for supplying the full catalogue of 'state of the art' weapons systems in 2007 just wasn't enough, so in 2008 they increased that spend to a genocidally-big \$1.6 trillion. To put it another way, that's roughly an average of extra \$3.5 billion of US taxpayers cash that Pentagon 'defence' buyers had to dish out every working day last year to friendly weapons contractors. That's a hellfire of a task in anyone's book, so it's little wonder no-one was really counting - too busy shaking hands on deals, putting in for bonuses and investing in their own arms companies no doubt.

So due to woeful mismanagement of contracts, plus equipment being delivered late, faulty and overbudget, the final bill for casting a scary shadow over the planet to nearly three hundred billion more than even the Dubya'n'Rumsfeld gang had the gall to approve.

But it all can't have come as too much of a surprise though as Pentagon spending has gone over budget for each of the last six years. And despite promises by 'defence' chiefs to be a little more 'together' with the readies, the problem is apparently just getting worse. Still, just cos they're financially incompetent doesn't mean we can't trust them to rule the world with their iron fists, does it?

PARTY & PROTEST

JUNE: 14 - **World Naked Bike Ride** - London. The 5th year of the event. Decorate your body and bike with messages of protest against oil dependency and car culture and get pedalling. Meet 3pm in Hyde Park, near Hyde Park Corner just north of the statue of Achilles. See www.nakedwiki.org/index.php ** 27 - **Critical Mass Brighton** - a special event to mark the death of Marie Vesco, a French activist killed in a road accident whilst on the way to the Carnival Against the Arms Trade (see SchNEWS 634). ** JULY: 4 - **Against the Borders, Against the G8** - rally at Japanese Embassy in London from 11.00am to show solidarity with activists in Japan. ** 5 - Take to the streets and be part of a **creative intervention in Croydon**. Artists, activists and alternative astronauts will weird out to show support for the G8 protests in Japan. Special attention will be paid to local sites of interest such as: Lunar House, the nerve centre of the UK Border Agency where people claim asylum and where their claims are (given all due consideration and then) refused. Electric House, an immigration reporting centre. Themes could include, but are not limited to militarism, capitalism, surveillance, sexism, racism, borders and control. Planning meeting is on June 15th - email londonfete@riseup.net or subscribe to list <https://lists.ucrony.net/mailman/listinfo/londonfete>

* For full listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

RAY OF LIGHT

Wednesday this week brought smashing news from the north of Ireland as, following a Belfast court jury trial, anti-war activists from Derry were all acquitted of criminal damage charges. During the Lebanon War in August 2006 they stormed and for eight hours occupied their local software development offices of Raytheon Corp., the fifth biggest arms company in the world.

After barricading themselves into the building they set about 'completely disabling' the mainframe computer server that links them to the global Raytheon production system. They threw computer terminals out of the window and held out a banner stating 'Raytheon has been decommissioned'.

After arrest, the nine first faced charges under the Terrorism Act for Aggravated Burglary which could have been tried by a juryless Diplock Court if these had not been dropped to criminal damage and affray. The affray charge was later dismissed by the judge on lack of evidence.

The defendants presented a clear anti-war defence saying that they acted under the genuine belief that they were attempting to prevent war crimes. The prosecution failed to counter this with the appearance of an arrogant director from Raytheon who admitted that he didn't give a shit if Raytheon's equipment was used in war crimes or not, or words to that effect.

One of the defendants, a well known local campaigning journalist, raised a smile when asked by the prosecutor why the court should not consider the computer smashing as sheer mindless destruction. If they had acted mindlessly, he replied, why open the windows first before throwing the computers out of them?

For more on the Derry campaign against Raytheon see www.indymedia.ie/

Supremely Indifferent?

Bad news for Dubya this week as the US Supreme Court ruled that foreign suspects held in Guantanamo Bay can now challenge the legality of their detention in US civilian courts. They finally overturned a previous decision to allow a 2006 law which removed such rights. Whether this will actually mean some of the 270 men remaining at the torture camp will ever get in front of a civilian judge to hear the evidence against them is unclear - the White House has said it is 'studying' the latest decision, presumably looking for ways to change the law slightly to negate the Supreme ruling, as it has successfully done on two previous occasions....

...and finally...

As police have been busy getting involved in the great internet downloading game - increasingly happy to arrest citizens for copyright infringement of films and music on Torrent sites - it seems the boys in blue aren't whiter than white themselves. The performing rights society (PRS) are taking them to task as music pirates for illegally listening to radio stations. Unlicensed broadcasts have been heard not only in Police stations and vehicles, but also Police conferences, gyms, office parties and even inflicted on people put on hold whilst calling to report crime.

PRS have now issued high court writs to force the bill to cough up and pay the bill for playing pop in public - or else coppers will have to make do with whistling generic variations of the Dixon of Dock Green theme.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all Pentagonads - look after the billions and the trillions will look after themselves. Honest!

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