



*And must have whiskey
Oh, you know why*

« Oil Prices - Get Used To It. | Main | Myanmar - The Junta Was Mostly Right »

June 17, 2008

Haji Habibullah Jan - Or Why 'The West' Will Lose in Afghanistan

An Afghan warlord and tribal chief welcomed the 'western' attack against Mullah Omar's Taliban. The Talibs were from a different power group than his own and he hoped to get a better deal with the new rulers.

But those 'westerners' put another rival group of his into power. Sure, they gave him a bit power too. He was elected into the parliament and the loot coming with that job made things better. But then the rival group in power screwed him. They used the 'westerners' to fight his interests with deadly consequences.

But he is a smart men and he fights back against these folks with sophisticated public relation. When that does not work, he shows off some of his real power.

The other side responds by again trying to use the 'westerners' to suppress him and his followers.

The outcome of this fight is uncertain. But it definitely shows one thing. Most 'westerners'

have no real comprehension of what the conflict in Afghanistan is really about, what Taliban are and are not and why 'the west' will end up defeated in Afghanistan just like Alexander the Great, the British imperialist of the 19th century and the Soviets.

Thus follows the story of Haji Habibullah Jan, the leader of the small but proud Pashtun Alizai tribe reconstructed from some deep Goggle dives.

It is longish, sorry for that, but it is also a mind opening look into a foreign culture even while based on 'western' news sources.

My search started with this story about the big [Afghan jail break](#) every major newssource recently covered. Those reports included this ridiculous line:

Lawmaker Habibullah Jan said some of the hunger strikers had been held without trial for more than two years. Others were given lengthy prison sentences after short trials.

Jan said 47 of the prisoners had **stitched their mouths shut** during the hunger strike in May.

The emphasised part is of course baloney. Pashtuns ain't fakirs. They do not stich their mouth shut. To reproduce that quote is pure [Orientalism](#). But Habibullah Jan knew that the 'western' press would react to such a juicy quote. That is obviously the reason why he put it out.

Still I wondered who that loudmouth is and why he did this. Here is what I came up with.

The earliest story to find about Habibullah Jan is from April 2002. Under the headline [Afghanistan looks to life without warlords](#) we find an interview with, oh yeah, a warlord:

Habibullah Jan was 16 when he took up a gun in 1978 and joined the "holy war." His father, a tribal leader, had been imprisoned by the new communist regime. "He's still missing," Habibullah notes, for the record.

Today Haji Habibullah is a heavysset man, with soft black beard, who chain-smokes Marlboro Lights through thick fingers. He is, in effect, a brigade commander for Naqibullah, with more than 2,000 men in his charge. His entire adult life has been spent in fighting and exile, victory and defeat.

"We finally drove the Russians out and the communist government collapsed. But our bad luck was that the mujahedeen came into power. They can't sit down together," Habibullah said. **"The second bit of bad luck was that the countries that supported us**

abandoned us."

Which country abandoned the resistance in Afghanistan after the Russians were defeated? Yes we know, the U.S did so. But Haji Habibullah Jan was ready to forget and to compromise:

Now that the Americans are back, Habibullah said, the "international community" must help finance and train a new national army to impose order on a disorderly map. "I hope that will mean the end of the warlords."

In 2004 some folks from Medicines Sans Frontieres [asked for help](#) from Habibullah:

In thirty minutes we arrived at our first destination, the compound of Commander Habibullah Jan in Senzari village. **Habibullah Jan is security responsible for the area around the road leading to Helmand province west of Kandahar.** His **private army** patrols the tracks and valleys of this region, often coming into conflict with destabilization forces. He was holding court in front of his compound with a group of elders as a smartly uniformed guard with a handlebar moustache waved us in.

...

He's an impressive man, strongly built and well dressed. He assured us there was no problem along the road to the camp and that he had many patrols in the surrounding area.

Haji Habibullah is also a smart man who has seen the world. He not only went to Mecca, but as part of an Afghan delegation which also included Hamid Karzai's brother Wali, [visited](#) Dubai and Japan in mid 2004.

The Washington Post [spoke](#) with Habibullah at a presidential election rally Hamid Karzai held in Kandahar in 2004.

The local military commander, who goes by the single name Habibullah, was busy preparing the rally and ticking off lists of tribes that had sent representatives. He said he had a good official relationship with the central government, but **his Pashtun heart was clearly with Qanooni, the Tajik mujahid from Panjshir.**

"When I was a boy, I carried a Kalashnikov on my shoulder. I do not want my children to carry a gun," he said, adding that he supported militia disarmament. But he complained that Karzai and many of his aides had lived in exile during the country's most bitter years and still keep foreign passports. "I am a citizen and I have the right to one vote," he said, "and **it will not be for Karzai.**"

In 2005 Habibullah Jan was himself up for election as a candidate for a the Wolesi Jirga, the Afghan parliament. Unfortunately, as the Pakistani Dawn reported from Kandahar on

September 5, 2005, that candidacy killed him:

Candidate **Habibullah Jan was killed** by the Taliban, provincial chief Abdul Rahman said.

"He was wounded by a mine planted outside his house and taken to hospital where he died," he said.

Well, maybe not. On October 9, 2005 Haji Habibullah Jan got 5,928 votes and was thereby elected as member of the parliament. (Only 25% of the registered voters did actually bother to get a purple finger.)

Between 2005 and 2007 there is nothing I find about this Habibullah. Those years seem to have been relatively peaceful times.

But then stories including him again start to come up again. In September 2007 the Canadian Globe and Mail quotes him:

"The Taliban are much weaker than last year," said Habibullah Jan. "They can't stay and fight if they're confronted."

Habibullah the optimist who certainly does not like the Talibs. But soon thereafter trouble starts. Two Mullahs in Habibullah's district get killed by U.S. special forces.

Hundreds of enraged Afghans, some chanting "death to Canada," blocked a highway Wednesday following a raid by foreign troops that left two religious leaders dead.

...

Canadian military officials have denied involvement in the raids by both their own soldiers and NATO's.

...

"Their informers are giving them wrong information," one protester told CP, referring to the information that led to the raids. "It is disgusting."

...

Habibullah Jan, a lawmaker from Sanzari village, told the Associated Press that NATO forces were responsible for the deaths.

He **warned that if international forces continued to target civilians, "people will take up arms against the government and NATO."**

Besides killing two religious leaders the U.S. military also took some prisoners.

One Afghan man at the protest told CBC News that he had **guests** in his house when soldiers burst into the building. **"The soldiers tied their hands and feet, covered their eyes**

and took them away," he said. Another witness said the raids were by American and Canadian soldiers, **who took eight people** and killed two.

It is a central issue in [Pashtun tribal code](#) to defend their guests.

Habibullah's son [joined the protest](#):

Neither the Canadians nor other NATO soldiers were involved in the raids, a military spokeswoman said; the **only other foreign troops operating in the area belong to U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom**, a counterterrorism force.

...

The slain men belonged to the **Alizai tribe**, a group **disenfranchised from the government**, and their deaths happened in a Kandahar suburb known as Senjaray, south of Highway 1, a ramshackle warren of mud huts that is notorious for hiding Taliban. Insurgents were spotted among the protesters yesterday, and elders say it took some effort to dissuade the mob from marching into Kandahar city.

...

"This is the biggest protest we have had in years," said Hyat Ullah, 21, **the son of local parliamentarian Habibullah Jan. "We ask the foreign forces to be very careful, to avoid getting into personal fights between people. These things make big problems."**

(Sidenote:

Half of the U.S. military in Afghanistan is not under NATO command but is kind of freelancing. This is a ridiculous situation and a main cause for all the trouble in Afghanistan. Unity of command is a MUST in all military endeavours.)

Now things get a bit more complicate as we have to dive into Afghan [tribal culture](#) (scroll down).

The 13+ million Pashtun in Afghanistan have two branches, the Durrani and Ghilzai. There are Zirak Durrani and Panjpai Durrani. The Zirak Durrani are government aligned. One of the tribal group in these are Popalzai with their most prominent member being President Hamid Karzai and his brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai. Wali plays a major role in Kandahar as chairman of the provincial council.

After the Sowiets left Afghanistan, the Zirak Durrani dominated Kandahar. When the groups under Mullah Omar got into power, they disenfranchised the Zirak Durrani in favour of their own Ghilzai subgroup. Now the Zirak Durrani rule again and they

disenfranchise all others.

One tribal group in the non-government aligned Panjpai Durrani are the Alizai.

AfghanProfile.net [notes](#) on the Alazai:

A bitter conflict between **this tribe's leader in Kandahar, Habibullah Jan**, and **Ahmed Wali Karzai** was a source of instability in the province until the two men reached a negotiated truce in recent weeks."

What was the reason for the bitter conflict? A fight about drug profits or some other loot? Did Wali Karzai, who has an MA from USC, send the Americans to kill the two Mullahs from Habibullah tribes?

We don't know. But something serious had happened and that 'negotiated truce' did not hold long.

A recent Times article about Wali Karzai's drug connections [says](#):

At the end of last year, **Habibullah Jan, a powerful tribal chief** and member of parliament from Kandahar, became the **first person to accuse Wali directly in parliament of involvement in the drugs trade.**

That was a big embarrassment for the Karzai brothers as it made some international waves. There even seems to be some truthiness to it.

Another Kandahar MP made a similar allegation, but would speak only off the record.

A senior Afghan security official, who also asked not to be identified, claimed that Afghan officials had repeatedly complained about Wali to President Karzai. "The problem is that neither the Americans nor the Europeans are interested in doing anything about this," he said.

Why are the 'westerners' not interested? They need both Karzais:

[Others] say that Wali brings co-operation and stability to the south, principally by maintaining **the dominance and loyalty of President Karzai's tribe**, the Popalzai.

Stability? Like more tribal feud? The Karzai brothers seem to have lost the senses to manage stuff on the ground.

Hamid Karzai last year selected the son of the deceased leader of the Alokazai tribe, which usually supports him, as the new chief of the tribe. That was a big mistake as the move was against the tribal rules where the elders decide about such, not the Afghan king and member of another tribe. Now the Alokazai are unruly and 'taliban' activity is up in their area.

So there are essentially feuds going on here. Habibullah never liked the Karzais anyway, but went along with the tide. Only after some U.S. forces, who support the Karzais rule in Kabul and Kandahar, raid his people, kill two of their religious leaders and take others as prisoner, he really gets pissed. He starts to denounce Wali Karzai in parliament and makes this a major issue with the foreign press.

The next we hear of him is last month, when he visited unruly prisoners in Kandahar:

More than 200 Taliban suspects ended a weeklong hunger strike at a prison in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar after a parliamentary delegation promised their cases would be reviewed, a lawmaker said Monday.

Lawmaker Habibullah Jan said the three-member delegation received written demands from the prisoners and would pass them on to President Hamid Karzai's government in Kabul.

To get 'western' press attention a public relation experienced Habibullah came up with the colourful picture:

He said some of those on the hunger strike had been held without trial for over two years. Others were given lengthy prison sentences after short trials. Jan said 47 of the prisoners had **stitched their mouths shut during the strike**.

The inmates had been captured by Afghan, NATO and U.S.-led forces, who are battling a fierce Taliban-led insurgency in the south, Jan said.

...

The Kandahar prison is under the jurisdiction of Afghan authorities.

The Afghan authority in Kandahar is **Ahmad Wali Karzai**.

How many of Habibullah's tribesmen were in the prison he visited? How many had been labeled 'taliban' and incarcerated by his rival Wali Karzai and his U.S. forces?

The next thing we hear, only a few days after Habibullah pacified the prisoners (with

what?), is the big [prison break](#):

More than 1,100 inmates of a prison in southern Afghanistan, including militants, escaped after a Taliban suicide attack on the building, the NATO force in Afghanistan said Saturday.

After this PR disaster Hamid Karzai tried to divert criticism by [threatening](#) to attack Pakistan. That didn't help much.

But now, he lets us know, the area west of Kandahar, the main area of Habibullah Jan's Alazai tribe and some Alokazai, is suddenly in [Taliban hands](#):

The Taliban have taken control of 18 villages west of the Argandab River and started digging trenches and mines, a tribal elder from the region said. NATO and Afghan forces moved troops in to the region and dropped leaflets from the air warning civilians to stay inside their homes if fighting erupted in their area.

Dropping leaflets in an area where most people are illiterate may not be good tactics. Anyway - are those people really 'taliban' or is Karzai cooking up some atrocity to punish the rival tribe and its head, Haji Habibullah Jan?

The United States military said a patrol of Afghan police and American and allied forces conducted a five-hour patrol from daybreak on the west side of the Argandab River valley, where there have been reports of Taliban fighters. The patrol **encountered no resistance**, said Lt. Col. Rumi Nielson-Green, a United States military spokeswoman at Bagram air base north of Kabul.

"Nothing but normal patterns of life were observed," Colonel Rumi said. She could not confirm reports that the Taliban was destroying bridges.

Hmm - no Talibs observed even though some Karzai surrogat says they are there?

So far the story as I could reconstruct it. I am sure we will hear more from Habibullah. That could be in an obituary or in some other context.

One thing is for sure. This fight against 'Taliban' has little to do with a group of lunatics or revolutionaries. It has a lot to do with tribal feuds, disenfranchised groups and fighting over some loot poor people have lost or found.

The western forces may be knowledgeable in these structures and use them for their purpose. Then, of course, you might also believe that the U.S. military was the power [behind the prison brake](#).

I do have some doubt over that though. Are the 'western forces' really smarter about Afghani society structures than Afghani academics? Are they smarter than Afghani warlords and tribal chiefs who have lived fighting and surviving for 30 plus years? Na.

From an remarkable 2008 survey and [report](#) by a Canadian reporter on the grounds in Kandahar:

In a sample of ordinary insurgents, 42 fighters in Kandahar province were asked by The Globe and Mail to identify their own tribe, and the results point to a divide within the Taliban ranks: Only five named themselves as members of the three major tribes most closely associated with the government, **suggesting that tribal animosity has become a factor that drives the recruitment of insurgents.**

...
"**This government is a family business,**" said a prominent Afghan aid worker in Kandahar. "**The other tribes get angry when a few tribes have all the power.**"

That is what it is about to Afghans. That is what 'taliban' are about.

Now please explain how the 'west' will win that war.

Posted by b on June 17, 2008 at 04:51 PM | [Permalink](#)

Comments

having talked to a number of soldiers who have served in Afghanistan, it is my impression that is the place that the pros go to to practice their trade. they all brag about how many bad guys they kill and the absolute freedom they have to do it.

no press to take embarrassing pictures or write shocking stories and even among left leaning so called progressives, it seems to be accepted as a necessary and just conflict.

I remember watching "Charlie Wilson's War" and noticing just how evil they were able to portray the Russians as they flew their helicopters and strafed women and children. I know that the only thing that changes between the movie and what is going on there now is the markings on the helicopters.

I fear this will continue for a long long time. to be sure there are voices that are pointing out the insanity of destroying poppies just before harvest, and even Sky News had an interview with an Afghan who pointed out how the present government in Afghanistan cannot work because the tribes are not represented.

It simply must be that this is the desired outcome, Afghanistan is of great strategic importance and will be held until the costs become prohibitive. It took 10 years and by Charlie Wilson's account, over a billion dollars and who knows how many dead mujahadeen to finally convince the Russians to leave, US Americans do not learn as quickly and have a lot more money to spend.

Posted by: dan of steele | Jun 17, 2008 5:22:30 PM | [1](#)

b

do not apologise for the length

confronted by the curious silence over the will & organisation behind the breaking apart of the prison in kandahar & the evident movements of another new campaign by the taliban - we need all the information we can get

the destructive power of the u s empire is matched only by its historical underestimation of its enemies & delusions of grandeur about its own possibilities

Posted by: [remembereringgiap](#) | Jun 17, 2008 5:44:15 PM | [2](#)

it's events like this prison break, reported by western sources without serious inquiry or cultural context, that makes me realize how heavily i rely on "alternative" news sources.

great post, b.

Posted by: [Lizard](#) | Jun 17, 2008 6:11:48 PM | [3](#)

it's events like this prison break, reported by western sources without serious inquiry or cultural context, that makes me realize how heavily i rely on "alternative" news sources.

great post, b.

Posted by: [Lizard](#) | Jun 17, 2008 6:11:51 PM | [4](#)

Great post Bernhard, although I am interested to know why it is you are so convinced the hunger strikers didn't sew their lips together. This practice (sewing the lips shut) was adopted by detainees in Australian immigration detention centres in 2002. Many of those detainees were Afghani, although [this 2002 green left article](#) carries an interview with an Iranian detainee who endeavours to explain lip sewing.

"

The government is determined to undermine support for the hunger strikers by any means possible, just as it did last September, when defence minister Peter Reith declared that asylum seekers had thrown their children overboard in an attempt to coerce the navy to rescue them and bring them to Australia. There was no evidence produced, and months later anonymous navy sources explained that the incident had never happened.

Ruddock asserted that lip sewing is not part of "Australian culture". Ziyad, a refugee from Iraq recently released from Woomera, told Green Left Weekly: "Someone asked me, is it common in your country to sew up your lips? I told them it's not common anywhere. It's the desperate action of people who have had no response from the immigration department or detention guards to their requests for information about their cases."

Heh the profile of Habibullah you have put together gives us some insight into exactly why tribal culture remains so strong in Afghanistan.

Habibullah has demonstrated an incredible ability to politic whatever power is on the ascendant in Afghanistan as he safeguards the interests of his fellow tribespeople. Without the power of the tribal unit and the political skills of their leader the Alizai people would have been decimated by now.

Too often westerners are given a picture of the tribal chief as despot, a point view that doesn't answer why tribespeople show such unquestioning support for their leader.

I'm sure there are tyrants amongst the chieftains, however given Pashtun culture is known for it's humanity in harsh circumstances, the responsibility of a host to his guests in one small example of

that, it is unlikely a despot could endure long term as tribe's leader. Eventually his actions would be deemed to breach etiquette and jeopardise his position.

Habibullah appears to enjoy the whole-hearted support of his clan, if he did not the wily Karzai greedheads would have undermined him and engineered a replacement.

I do wonder if he was involved in the planning of the prison break. presumably some of those guests detained in the amerikan raid on Senzari/Senjaray. (whether canada was involved in the raids or not canadian media are probably the worst way to get at the facts. It is difficult to believe that amerikan forces could carry out quite a large operation without the knowledge/co-operation of the local forces on the ground. The canadian media would never acknowledge their own troops' involvement just as the NZ media never admits to kiwi troops getting up to anything other than restoring the bamiyan buddhas. The media is told that a story implicating their own troops will endanger those troops. So the media give in to this bullshit extortion. Of course the 'talib' or warlords or whatever know who was on the raids so that isn't an issue. The issue is if the citizens back home learn the extent of their country's involvement in the slaughter they will agitate to get them 'home'.)

If Habibullah Jan was involved in the prison break, on first glance it would seem he has put himself between a rock and a hard place. That is Karzai can demand that Habibullah be arrested or assassinated for 'treason'.

In reality it is Habibullah who has put the Karzais and the Nato forces into a granite sandwich. Denouncing Habibullah as the instigator of the prison break could blow the Taliban myth. Habibullah Jan is sufficiently well known as an opponent of the Taliban and as a local tribal leader that a denunciation could really screw the pooch. If it becomes generally known that the 'war' in Afghanistan has less to do with fighting Mullah Omar's mob than ensuring the Karzai clan dominate an unrepresentative government dedicated to smuggling smack into the nations who are propping up the Karzai mob, old Gordon Brown is really gonna have his work cut out keeping the english there. Same for most of the coalition of the swilling, I'd reckon.

Though saying that one still wonders why Habibullah Jan would organise a jailbreak.

What does his tribe gain by outright war with the Karzais? Even if this thing doesn't escalate any further it is difficult to see what the Alizai mob gained by a prison break.

Still we don't have enough facts. For all we know the Karzais may have decided to pay Habibullah back for his comment about Wali's smack business, by locking up the Alizai's able bodied males. That would have left the clan under-manned during the harvest season, maybe busting the men out was the only viable alternative.

Posted by: [Debs is dead](#) | Jun 17, 2008 8:28:53 PM | [5](#)

Thank you Bernhard.

Posted by: beq | Jun 17, 2008 9:57:14 PM | [6](#)

As cathartic as it is to surmise on [this](#):
and [this](#):

from 10,000 miles and 1,000 years of civilization away, the simple fact is that Afghanistan will still be there long after the United States are subsumed into some Uber NeoZi.con Big Brother rollup dialectic, like Reform. Prosperity. Peace. Jesus!

You could make a good case that the prison break was timed perfectly to coincide with the donor nations conference pledge of \$15B. Bush to Musharraf, "Dude! I need another favor! Yeah, yeah, 9/11. Look, we're on the hook for \$15B to waste rebuilding the sand box, I need you to make a prison break, so we can disappear that \$15B into "other national security interests". You with me?" The last \$10B Bush.con pledged for Afghanistan became bales of \$100s in Baghdad and New Orleans.

Everything is a front, and everything is a cover up!

Foreigners own 35% of American debt and are buying American companies at roughly 1% per year. Within 10 years, wealthy foreign royals will control the majority of American capital. The majority 56% of Americans work for government or contracted to it. The majority of GDP counted is just government services recycling our taxes and printing money. And that number is growing as fast as the number of homeless, currently 11% of Americans, and soon to add Ms more, maybe 10Ms, homeless, and so unregistered aliens in their own country, *unable to vote*.

Ahh, but America is government **by the majority**.

The majority will simply morph from government dole to foreign ownership over the next 10 years, while John McCain makes a big show of drilling ANWR and ignoring the gribbles eating away at the foundations of the Last Best Hope. Bye bye American Pie.

NeoZi.con's motto is Full Spectrum Dominance.

They don't stop. They never stop.
You can't negotiate with them.
They terminate. That's all they do.

What did he just say?

He says you're very beautiful.
He is ashamed to ask you for five dollars for this picture.
But if he doesn't, his father will beat him.

Pretty good hustle, kid.
What did he just say?

He said there's a storm coming in.

I know.

On to Tehran.

Posted by: [Super Duper](#) | Jun 18, 2008 1:17:59 AM | [7](#)

excellent piece b.

Karzai wants negotiations with Mullah Omar, NATO is increasingly casualty averse, NATO/USA air-strikes become Talibans best recruiting tool, NATO morale increasingly questionable, Pashtun morale unshaking.

on the clan level, the Pashtun clan leaders/chiefs may not be able to resist an eventual Taliban sweep of Kandahar even with NATO/USA's qualified assistance.

NATO/USA may have become so casualty-averse and so reliant on air-power that it may not be capable of responding to incidental ground attacks such as a prison break a few blocks from the NATO/USA garrison.

Overall a mess

Posted by: [jony_b_cool](#) | Jun 18, 2008 2:27:20 AM | [8](#)

A fine microcosm of the larger wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. is simply the hapless provocateur playing out their geopolitical fantasies of imperial conquest in a cultural context that they, along with their historic predecessors in failure, never seem to fathom. Its probably no accident that the tribal complexities that vex the occupier are in part due to the fact that both cultures (A&I) have long histories of occupation that have developed cultural intricacies and/or anti-bodies that operate beneath the radar. High, or low on the list of such, is the fluid and unpredictable nature of loyalties, affiliations, and trust on the part of tribal hierarchies. That willy-nilly, the low rent occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq find themselves dependent upon in order to "control" the populations. This necessarily puts the occupation authorities and their minions on par as just another tribal actor in an ever evolving bar fight, that in spite of their fancy weapons and money, but because of their cultural illiteracy puts them in the weaker position and subject to every trick in the tribal book - that will in the end simply bleed them dry.

Posted by: [anna missed](#) | Jun 18, 2008 2:44:52 AM | [9](#)

i sort of agree with Super Duper's super cynical implication that whatever degree tribal wrangling is involved in the prison break, "the west" is not necessarily embarrassed (media won't let that happen) because civil unrest=a sustained or increased support for funding.

Posted by: [Lizard](#) | Jun 18, 2008 2:52:06 AM | [10](#)

[Reidr Visser](#) on the upcoming Iraqi elections and the role of Iran:

An additional source of weakness in the Iraqi government on which the Bush administration has placed its bets is the Iran factor. During the negotiations for a new security arrangement between the United States and Iraq, Western observers have generally assumed that Iranian influences are articulated through “subversive” forces like the Sadrists and the Lebanese Hizbollah only. **This overlooks the possibility that Iran may be working with both hands, inside and outside the government at the same time, partly cooperating with the United States, partly putting pressure on it.** Tehran has done this before, for example in April 2003, before Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, SCIRI's leader, returned to Iraq. Hakim was then heavily criticised in the conservative Iranian media for intending to cooperate with the Americans in Iraq, and yet his return to Iraq went ahead – no doubt an expression that the ultimate aim of the Iranians was to have him there. Had Hakim's cooperation with Washington been seen as truly inimical to Iranian interests, his return could have been prevented very easily. **Similarly, today, Iran may well be using its influence inside the Iraqi government in the hope that some kind of “grand bargain” with the Americans suitable to its interests in Iraq can still be arrived at, while they simultaneously maintain several fallback options.** At least, Tehran could be interested in the process for its own sake, pending the arrival of a new US administration in Washington.

Meanwhile, much of the American debate of these issues remains focused on the wrong indicators. **Instead of probing the issue of Iranian influences inside the Maliki government, or discussing the prospect of a new cross-sectarian Iraqi nationalist alliance, many US analysts tend to emphasise the return of a couple of Sunni figureheads to the Maliki government as the ultimate yardstick for “success” in national reconciliation.** But if the wider regional dimension is taken into account, there can be no doubt that both Iraqi and US national interests would be better served with an Iraqi government less focused on sectarian arithmetic but more in touch with popular feeling and nationalist ideals. That is also why a US strategy of turning a blind eye to highhandedness by Maliki in the run-up to the provincial elections is bound to fail in the long term, even if it may be convenient to have a calm façade in Iraq at the time of the US presidential elections. **By now, the Americans should know that if they opt to play hardball with the Shiite factions in Iraq, they will be outperformed very easily by the Iranians.** A far better solution would be simply to give Iraqi voters unrestrained possibilities for electing new faces to the provincial assemblies next autumn. The number of coalitions formed before the 30 June deadline will be an important sign of how that project is progressing.

what can I say? couldn't ask for better conformation for some suspicions.

Posted by: [anna missed](#) | Jun 18, 2008 5:32:33 AM | [11](#)

Now add to the intrigue. Zalmay Khalilzad, neocon Cheney man who put Karzai in power in Afghanistan and went on to oversee the disaster that is Iraq along with buddy Paul Bremer and got rewarded with the UN Ambassadorship when neocon Bolton could not get confirmed is reportedly planning [on taking over the Afghan presidency](#).

The bottom line is the Afghan people are screwed. Afghani's with foreign passports and allegiances only to themselves and their Swiss bank accounts get to play big games. Of course since the cash flows are opium and military and civilian aid expect the usual looting.

Posted by: [ab initio](#) | Jun 18, 2008 5:41:00 PM | [12](#)

re khalilzad running to replace karzai, this is from *inner city press* [last friday](#)

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 -- Is this finally a real denial? Friday afternoon in front of the Security Council, Inner City Press asked U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to unequivocally deny -- or confirm! -- reports that he may want to run for the presidency of Afghanistan. The U.S. Mission has transcribed the exchange:

Inner City Press: Today's [Washington Post](#) said that you wanted to go to the Afghanistan donor's conference in Paris but didn't go in order not to upstage President Karzai because you may want to run for President of Afghanistan. Can you unequivocally deny or confirm that is your intention?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well first let me say that I was not going to go to the Paris conference - I think there was a discussion of perhaps a private dinner between me and President Karzai. Second, with regard to the - I didn't do that because in part my responsibilities here as President of the Council as we've seen today. With regard to the piece in the post I will not ask Richard Holbrooke, one of my distinguished predecessors who was quoted in that piece, I will not ask him to head my committee to search for my vice president. But more seriously I have said strongly, as clearly as I can that I am not a candidate for the President of Afghanistan. How many times do I have to say it? I am honored to have the opportunity to represent the United States in the United Nations. This is my job and when I leave this job I will work in the private sector in the United States of America. Thank you very much

Next question -- Rand Corporation? Oil company? We'll see.

Posted by: [b real](#) | Jun 18, 2008 6:20:44 PM | [13](#)

[Afghan and NATO forces rout Taliban: governor](#)

The story is a bit weird. The governor of Kandahar says there were hundreds of fighters that blew up bridges etc. and now hundreds were killed and all is fine.

"The Taliban have been cleared totally from Arghandab district," Khalid said.

"They have suffered hundreds of dead and wounded and many of their casualties are Pakistanis," he said.

How does one differentiate a pashtun from Pakistan from one from Afghanistan?

NATO says there a few fighters some 20 killed and they don't know if they are gone.

Yet, NATO officials said there had been no major encounters or heavy bombardments and it was too early to agree with Governor Khalid's assessment that the Taliban had been evicted.

Who is lying here? Difficult to say. I guess the governor wanted a big show after he lost face in the

prison break or he needed to get rid of some rival.

NATO fell for it and was used as a tool.

Posted by: [b](#) | Jun 19, 2008 10:26:04 AM | [14](#)

Actually, if the Taliban indeed are now all about tribal animosities, instead of a united ideology allied to al-Qaeda, I would consider that a step towards Karzai and NATO/ISAF winning the war. Negotiations with different Taliban factions could then be conducted in the context of settling tribal disputes, and integrating tribal power structures into the National government. If tribal disputes are settled, that would fracture the Taliban, and take away the motivation of people to fight for Mullah Omar, Haqqani, and OBL. Everyone could work for a negotiated solution where all tribal issues are addressed, leaving Omar, OBL and the Taliban and al-Qaeda leadership of their era without support.

Posted by: [Inkan1969](#) | Jun 19, 2008 1:16:05 PM | [15](#)

You guys. There are no Taliban except for some resistance fighters against the occupation. The Taliban that we are told exist were airlifted out of Afghanistan as the fighting broke out by the US. That's Seymour Hersh and MSNBC. The Taliban that broke out of the jail two weeks ago, the US and NATO forces literally stood by and let them do what they wanted. Iranian TV and The UK Globe and Mail reported on this. Create the problem, or let one exacerbate, and then step in when the people cry out and offer the solutions that you already preplanned to introduce. Oh, and those Taliban infiltrating the villages as reported by the NYTimes? Lies. Want to see my claims here with the sources? Read this.

<http://warofillusions.wordpress.com/2008/06/18/new-blood-for-afghanistan-a-second-chapter/>

Posted by: [Stefan](#) | Jul 4, 2008 1:02:16 PM | [16](#)

Sounds like they got him THIS time....

Gunmen assassinate Kandahar MP
Member of Lower House gunned down on his way home from army base
quqnoo.com, 5 Jul 2008 14:25

[Article link](#)

GUNMEN have shot dead a Member of Parliament in the southern province of Kandahar, an official said.

A member of the Lower House for Kandahar, Haji Habibullah Jan, was gunned down on his way

home in the Zheray at about 10pm on Friday, a member of Kandahar's provincial council said.

He had recently visited an Afghan army base in the district, where Canadian and Afghan troops have fought fierce battles with the Taliban over the last two years.

Jan is the 10th MP to be killed since parliament was elected in 2005.

He was a military commander in Kandahar, fighting the Soviet occupation in the 1980s before being elected to Parliament.

In Kabul, Lower House secretary Abdul Sattar Khawasi condemned the assassination and said that MPs shared the grief of Kandahar's residents.

Posted by: milnews.ca | Jul 5, 2008 7:58:43 AM | [17](#)

Post a comment

Name:

Email Address:

URL:

Remember personal info?



HTML Tags:

Text → **Text**

<I>Text</I> → *Text*

<U>Text</U> → Text

<BLOCKQUOTE>Text</BLOCKQUOTE>

Link to ACLU → [Link to](http://www.aclu.org)

[ACLU](#)

Comments:

Preview

Post

« Oil Prices - Get Used To It. | Main | Myanmar - The Junta Was Mostly Right »

1,425,515 Visitors
Since June 30, 2004