

From: "debra mair" <debramair@rogers.com>  
To: "Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice members forum" <cusj-l@lists.uua.org>  
Subject: Re: [CUSJ-L] Fw: peacewatch  
Date: June-07-08 4:25 PM

This is the final wording of the resolution

Therefore be it resolved that the presidents of CUSJ and CUC be requested to write Prime Minister Harper and demand the immediate withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan and ask the government to request a UN peace keeping force. We request that Canadian troops be replaced with civilian assistance, where requested by Afghans, for the purpose of rebuilding physical and social infrastructure (roads, bridges, buildings; judicial systems, police forces, educational institutes...)

Frances Deverell <frandev@sympatico.ca> wrote:

Would it be possible to have the final wording of the resolution passed at our annual meeting to withdraw troops?  
Blessings,

Rev. Frances Deverell

"It's hard to know when to respond to the seductiveness of the world and when to respond to its challenge. If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I rise in the morning torn between the desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day." E.B. White

----- Original Message -----

From: Bob Stevenson  
To: CUSJ listserve  
Sent: Wednesday, June 04, 2008 2:41 PM  
Subject: [CUSJ-L] Fw: peacewatch

FYI

----- Original Message ----- From: Ria Heynen  
To: Ria Heynen  
Sent: Wednesday, June 04, 2008 10:43 AM  
Subject: peacewatch

Hello,  
I thought this worthwhile to share with you!  
Ria

The story is in 5 parts but too big for the list apparently. So i included only the first one. The rest is at the web site.  
Marc Azar  
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,556304,00.html>  
Why NATO Troops Can't Deliver Peace in Afghanistan  
By Ullrich Fichtner

FROM THE MAGAZINE

05/29/2008

Forty nations are embroiled in an unwinnable war in Afghanistan. Anyone who travels through the country with Western troops soon realizes that NATO forces would have to be increased tenfold for peace to be even a remote possibility.

Thirteen days before the next attempt on his life, Afghan President Hamid Karzai arrives at a cabinet meeting, surrounded by a swarm of bodyguards. He holds his shirt collar shut against the rainy cold in Kabul. It's a Monday in mid-April -- and while there may be some good news this morning, most of it is bad. The Canadians want Karzai to dismiss the governor of Kandahar, the United Nations contingent is missing 50,000 tons of food and the Kazakh ambassador is promising money for a hospital in Bamyan. A suicide bomber has blown himself up in Helmand, the Norwegian defense minister is visiting Kabul and the opium harvest has begun in southern Afghanistan. A cabinet meeting is about to begin in the presidential palace.

Karzai is the last to arrive, long after his ministers have gathered at the palace. Visitors must pass through four security checkpoints, walk through metal detectors three times and turn over their bags to be sniffed by dogs. It takes an hour to reach the innermost courtyard, where Karzai's palace -- the cheerful villa Gul Khana, set in a garden planted with cedar trees -- is located. When the president enters the room at 9 a.m., everyone sitting around the long conference table stands up, 28 men and one woman. This is the group that governs Afghanistan -- officially, at least.

To begin the meeting, an imam chants lengthy suras from the Koran. Then Karzai listens to a report from his defense minister, who has just returned from a trip to India. The president's demeanor is that of a royal leader. Instead of asking many questions, he simply gives orders. He is not wearing his trademark felt cap and brightly colored coat. Instead, he chairs the meeting in his shirtsleeves, and the demands he imposes on the cabinet are impossible. He wants the ministers to take immediate action against high food prices, he orders the transportation minister to finally bring security to the highway between Kabul and Kandahar, and he says: "It's raining in the north; at least that's good news."

At 10:15, a secretary wearing a pinstriped suit enters the room quietly, sidles along the table and hands the president a piece of paper. Karzai reads the note and nods. The aide leaves the room and returns with a telephone.

Karzai picks up the receiver, and when he speaks everyone in the room can hear him. "What? Pakistani troops have crossed the border? Where exactly? They're shooting with rockets? There is fighting?" The news descends on Karzai's mood like a hammer. He hangs up the phone, wipes his hand across his bald head and says: "I handed the students at the university their diplomas yesterday. That was a very good day."

Good days are in short supply in Afghanistan, a country at war -- or involved in several wars, to be exact. There is constant fighting on many fronts, hard and soft. The newspapers, and there are many of them in Kabul now, serve up pages of chaotic images every day. Their reports are about bombs and drinking water, holy warriors and wheat prices, NATO air attacks and schoolbooks, kidnapped children, refugees and bandits.

Almost seven years have passed since the overthrow of the Taliban regime, and in those seven years half of the world has tried to bring a better future and, most of all, peace to this new country, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. As part of the NATO military operation known as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), 40 nations have 60,000 soldiers deployed in the country. There are 26 United Nations organizations in Afghanistan, and hundreds of private and government agencies are pumping money, materials and know-how into the country's 34 provinces. But anyone seeking success stories or asking about failures will encounter reports that do not seem to be coming from the same country.

According to the speeches and statements Western military officials, diplomats and politicians are constantly churning out, the security situation has improved substantially, the military successes are obvious and the Taliban are as good as defeated. But peace and Afghanistan, say the Afghans when speaking to a domestic audience, are still two incompatible words.

Last year, 1,469 bombs exploded along Afghan roads, a number almost five times as high as in 2004. There were 8,950 armed attacks on troops and civilian support personnel, 10 times more than only three years earlier. One hundred and thirty suicide bombers blew themselves up in 2007. There were three suicide bombings in 2004.

There is no peace anywhere in Afghanistan, not even in the north (more...), which officials repeatedly insist has been pacified. Anyone who travels the country -- making the obligatory rounds to its ministries, speaking with Western ambassadors, UN directors, ISAF commanders and provincial governors, and meeting with women's rights activists, narcotics officers and police chiefs -- is bound to return with many dark questions and an ominous feeling that this mission is not a task to be measured in years, but in decades, many decades.

A dramatic chapter in world history is being written in the process, in this country dominated by the Hindu Kush mountains and the formidable Sefid Kuh range, and the endless deserts of Kandahar and Helmand. The United States and Europe have stumbled their way into a new type of international war, one in which all of today's global and regional powers are involved. What will happen to NATO if it fails in the first out-of-area mission in its history? And where will the UN be if this ambitious nation-building project is ultimately a disappointment?

The country is in the grip of global interest-driven politics. It is, as so often in its history, a pawn on a chessboard surrounded by many more than two players. If the concerted efforts of the Western community are not delivering results as quickly as expected, this can be attributed partly to the fact that the efforts of one half of the world are constantly being thwarted by those of the other half.

While NATO tries to disarm the population, the flow of bazookas and guns coming into the country from Pakistan remains unabated. The Iranian government is accused of promoting the trade in Afghan opium and heroin to inflict harm on the West. Meanwhile, Russia is blamed for using its Soviet-era influence to weaken NATO, its old rival, on Afghan soil.

China, Afghanistan's easternmost neighbor, hopes to exploit untapped mineral sources in the nearby mountains. Dubai, the Liechtenstein of the Middle East, offers a place to launder and park dirty money. It is as if a first, crude world war of the 21st century were taking place on Afghan soil, a war that remains unacknowledged and undeclared.

#### "What We're Fighting For"

"Look at this," says ISAF Commander Dan McNeill, wearing sunglasses as he stands next to a Canadian C-130 transport plane about to take off from Kabul's military airport. "Look, take a picture of this. This here is what we're fighting for."

The general cuts through the delegation he is accompanying to Helmand in the south. He pushes aside Zalmai Rassoul, President Karzai's national security advisor, brushing past deputy interior ministers and even General Karimi, the chief of operations for the Afghan national army. On this hazy day, McNeill finally reaches the lone woman standing at the back of the group, an Afghan woman, wearing makeup and no veil.

McNeill presents her like a trophy, and says: "Here, this is it." The woman, a government employee who looks to be about 40, smiles shyly and gives the impression of wanting to be somewhere else. The four-star general, wearing his combat uniform, poses for a photograph with the woman. McNeill, in his last few days as ISAF commander and accustomed to giving orders, says: "Write about this. This is why we're here."

The flight to Helmand passes along mountain chains south of Kabul. Within about an hour, the plane lands at Camp Bastion, little more than a dusty airstrip in a vast, empty desert. The delegation from Kabul has to transfer to a helicopter to reach Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand Province. There they will meet with the new governor, Gulab Mangal, who has invited them to attend a grand shura, or council of elders, leaders and religious figures.

The travelers board two Sea Knight helicopters, which take them on a high-speed, low-altitude flight westward across a sea of opium poppy fields.

At the landing site, a soccer field, the guests board armored personnel carriers in groups of three and don bulletproof vests. Eventually the long convoy embarks on what amounts to a very short journey. The destination, the governor's official residence, is less than 300 meters from the soccer field, past Afghan soldiers who line the street, saluting the visiting dignitaries. Leading up to the Helmand trip, McNeill had been brimming with success stories and rosy analyses. He said: "All neighboring countries are interested in regional stability." And he said that not a single child could attend school before the ISAF operation began, and that there are now 6 million schoolchildren in the country. Of course, the general added, there are still "volatile areas" along the border with Pakistan. But the security situation, he insisted, had "improved significantly."

He said the terrorists are, by and large, little more than a fractured bunch, no longer capable of launching substantial attacks. Those were the words of Dan McNeill, the words he used in his messages intended for a Western audience, the words he used in his standard speech, written for chancellors and prime ministers. But little of what the general said jibes with the reports he is now getting during his visit to Helmand.

#### Bomb Attacks, Roadside Bandits and Kidnappers

In an office behind closed doors, filled with furniture upholstered in a floral motif, the governor reports that half of the districts in his province are out of control. Alliances formed by the Taliban and drug barons, he says, rule the villages, and none of the highways are safe against bomb attacks, roadside bandits and kidnappers. According to Mangal, Pakistan has a

finger in every pie here, driving the teachers from the schools (the ones that haven't been burned to the ground yet), and forcing farmers to plant opium poppies.

The delegates from Kabul listen and drink their tea. They are listening to familiar words, the words of reports meant for the Afghan and not the Western public, words that are brutally realistic and unadorned.

McNeill promises the governor that he is now able to send an additional 3,200 US Marines to Helmand, and that the British have also maximized their troop levels in the province. Things are moving forward, the general insists, and things will continue to move forward. Karzai's people promise money and show good faith.

The guests nibble on nuts and raisins, and after two hours the conversation begins to subside. "If you want people to produce melons instead of heroin, you have to give them a market for melons," says a man in the governor's group. No one even attempts to respond to his sentence. Food is brought in: soup, salad, flatbread and kebabs on long skewers. The armored personnel carriers are waiting outside. It's time for the guests to return to Kabul.

Translated from the German by Christopher Sultan.

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(Bob Van Alstyne)

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