



The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus

in-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

An Afghan Okinawa

Afghan Peace Volunteers with an introduction by C. Douglas Lummis

A Japanese translation of the Afghan Peace Volunteers text is available [here](#).

Reading this beautifully written appeal from the Afghan Peace Volunteers is like hearing, amid the drums and trumpets of war, the delicate sound of a flute. What is heartbreaking about the Afghan struggle is that none of the main contenders we hear about – the Karzai government, the U.S. military, NATO, the Taliban, al Qaeda – seems capable of hearing that sound. An eye for an eye, said Gandhi, and the whole world goes blind. A bomb for a bomb, it could be added, and the world goes deaf as well – in particular, deaf to the sound of peace. It is heartening, and a source of hope, to hear that sound coming from Afghanistan, despite everything.

As one who lives in Okinawa, I find it fascinating that these young people (they seem to be a group mostly of college students) have chosen Okinawa as exemplifying the situation they want to avoid. The differences are great, but on the point they want to emphasize – never-ending U.S. military occupation against the will of the people – the comparison is fair enough. It is sad to learn that Okinawa's situation has become so notorious as to serve as a negative example to the long-suffering people of Afghanistan. On the other hand, it is encouraging to remember that it is because of the stubborn protest and resistance of the Okinawan people that their situation has become known around the world. And the Peace Volunteers are right: it indeed was Okinawan resistance to the joint U.S.-Japanese government plan to build a new base on Okinawa that cost Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama his job. And – watch carefully – Okinawan resistance may bring down the present P.M. as well. The sound of the flute of peace may be soft, but it can generate real power.

So the Peace Volunteers are also right in hinting that, rather than the drums and trumpets of war, it might be the music of peace that brings down the Karzai government and drives the U.S. military from their country. Their manifesto comes at a time when NATO and the U.S. trumpet their announcement of the withdrawal of NATO combat forces in 2014 while continuing to plan for permanent occupation of a nation that they have left in ruins. I hope that our printing their appeal in the Asia-Pacific Journal makes a small contribution toward that end.

C. Douglas Lummis



It is the same in Afghanistan.

There will be no U.S. troop withdrawal in 2014

We are ordinary Afghans wishing for peace, and we have eyes and ears and feelings of love and despair, so please read on.

[The Washington Post](#), in reporting the recent signing of the "U.S. Afghan Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement", stated that "U.S. trainers and Special Operations troops that remain beyond 2014 will live on Afghan bases."

U.S. citizens should understand that there will not be a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2014, whether Obama or Romney wins. As Steve Chapman of the [Chicago Tribune](#) wrote in 'Every President is a war President', "There is no Democratic or Republican Party. There is only the war party."

Building a global guns-and-graves culture?

Sadly, all of the world's Presidents and Prime Ministers today are Commander-in-CEOs that wage geopolitical and economic wars against their own and other people, leveraging hard, militarized money and power.

People in many places are protesting to change this status quo, no longer content with political lies at the people's expense. Could this be the beautiful birth of our Human Spring? We've always known the flowering of that spring will take time.

Andrew Exum, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, [criticized](#) Obama for implying that the war was winding down. "I think it is misleading to say we are winding down the war," Exum said. "The war does not stop and start according to our desires, and it will not stop for the Afghans. It will also not stop for the many U.S. special operations forces that will continue to fight by, with, and through the Afghans."

In the fortified but chronically battle-ravaged capital city of Kabul, the only city in Afghanistan where, backed by the U.S. military, Hamid Karzai actually governs, 16-year-old Ali was disappointed that a seemingly fearful Obama, arriving by night, sneaked into the unlit city with its overflowing sewage and vanishing water table to sign the "Enduring Strategic Partnership" agreement. Ali awoke that May 1st morning and got news of the deal. "What?" he asked. "They couldn't even honorably face the people they seek to rule!"



Obama meets Karzai in Kabul

In the [Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement](#), under point six of Section III which is entitled *Advanced Long-Term Security*, we read that "Afghanistan shall provide U.S. personnel continued access to and use of Afghan facilities through 2014, and beyond as may be agreed in the Bilateral Security Agreement, for the purposes of combating al-Qaeda and its affiliates, training the Afghan Security Forces and other mutually determined missions to advance shared security interests."

Instead of plans to withdraw all U.S. troops, the '...continued access to and use of Afghan facilities through 2014, and beyond...' are plans to establish an 'Afghan Okinawa'.

Human meaning vs. cynical semantics

The Obama administration has cleverly assuaged concerns inside the U.S. with the *nominally* factual claim that the U.S. seeks 'no permanent military bases in

Afghanistan'.

This Orwellian play with words had successfully enabled President Obama to declare in a 32-page [report](#) entitled *United States Activities in Libya* that the Libya fight is not a war, but just 'kinetic military actions,' thus allowing Obama to continue the Libyan intervention beyond 60 days without the congressional approval required by the U.S. Constitution and the [War Powers Resolution](#) of 1973.

'No Libya war'? 'No permanent military base in Afghanistan'?

The reality is that the U.S. bases will be "Afghan" bases, but housing as many as 20,000 U.S. "trainers" and Special Ops forces, actually numbering more than the U.S. troops currently stationed at the controversial Futenma airbase in Okinawa, Japan, and double the number that will remain there after the troop withdrawal recently (and heatedly) [negotiated](#) with Japan.

Karzai should note how keeping U.S. troops at the Japanese Okinawa base has become so socially and politically unacceptable.

President Karzai is naturally concerned about his legacy and should therefore consider the possibility that even those Afghans who are now happy with U.S. military dollars will later demand an end to the 'Afghan Okinawa' just as the dignified Japanese have. To prevent a fall from grace in the history books, Karzai should also [read](#) how Japanese PM Yukio Hatoyama had to resign over the Okinawa row, just 8 months after he had come into power.

An Afghan opposition party, the National United Front, has already stated that the Strategic Partnership Agreement will be condemned by Afghanistan's present and future generations.

The majority of U.S. citizens who want the war in Afghanistan to end will be disappointed that there won't be a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2014 after all.

There will not be a complete U.S. troop withdrawal in 2014.

Not all U.S. troops will withdraw in 2014.

There were never plans to withdraw all U.S. troops in 2014.

'Withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2014' is Obama's 'war of perceptions'.

In how many ways need we say this for our U.S. friends, so that they can ask for their own public opinion against the Afghan war to be democratically considered?

Civility and brutality

"We also want a functioning economy for everyone, decent livelihoods in a secure environment so that we can study, work and return home safely every day. U.S. Special Ops and drones cannot do that for us," says Shams, an Afghan Peace Volunteer.

Ordinary Afghans, like ordinary Americans, want the Afghan war to end.

But there are differences which should be openly addressed as to how we want the Afghan war to end.

Whereas both ordinary Americans and Afghans appreciate civility, their governments have become so militarized that they offer no civil options.

Using U.S. Special Ops and drones is a military option, an option amply proven over the Afghan centuries to have failed. It is not a civil option.

"I would rather have one unarmed American humanitarian teacher or worker in my village than a thousand armed Taliban or American soldiers," says Abdulhai. "I can eat bread, I can't eat bullets. I need ways to earn a living, not ways to kill a man."

To Abdulhai, bread, education and work is defense, genuine civil defense.

There are no physical 'terrorist havens' in Afghanistan, Pakistan or anywhere else in the world that U.S. Special Ops forces can annihilate to 'finish the job' as Obama has commanded them.

The 'terrorist' approach here is not only the military approach adopted by Al Qaeda and its constantly sprouting affiliates, but clearly also the military approach adopted by the U.S. government in its foreign policy aim of achieving global 'full spectrum dominance', as described in the '*Joint Vision 2020*' blue print of the [U.S. Department of Defense](#).

Arriving superpower China, like the departed powers of Britain and Russia and the U.S. superpower so slow in departing, can be expected to adopt the same approach of hard, brutal force.

All of them, whether amoral philosophers, Muslim 'jihadis' or Augustinian 'crusaders', have done little but disappoint and then kill the Afghan people, just as their traditional tactics have betrayed and slaughtered so much of the human race.

Some may applaud Obama's midnight approval of an Afghan Okinawa, but please respect our humanity when we say that we don't. We detest the epaulettes, the weapons, the salutes, the hubris, the stealth and the Orwellian words in English and Dari that violate our yearning for truth.

From the pre-dawn darkness of Obama's night swoop through Kabul (all to seal a 'new day' of perpetual war in South Asia) to the subsequent Taliban attacks on Green Village in which children on the way to school were killed, we hope you'll hear this voice.

This voice is in you too, and it is awakening.

'Help us with civil dignities.

Don't applaud an Afghan Okinawa.

Withdraw your Special brutalities.



Bring ALL your troops home.'

Who We Are

We are Afghan college students and youth who started this journey in 2008.

The Afghan Peace Volunteers are a grassroots group of ordinary, multi-ethnic Afghans seeking a **life of non-violence, the unity of all people, equality, and self-reliance**. We seek non-military solutions for Afghanistan and do not work for the benefit of any political group or religion.

We envision Afghans from all ethnic groups uniting for a non-violent movement towards a peaceful life.

C. Douglas Lummis, a former US Marine stationed on Okinawa and a present resident of Okinawa, is the author of [Radical Democracy](#) and other books in Japanese and English. A Japan Focus associate, he formerly taught at Tsuda College.

Recommended citation: *Afghan Peace Volunteers with an introduction by C. Douglas Lummis, "An Afghan Okinawa," The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol 10, Issue 22, No 3, May 28, 2012.*

Created by Datamomentum