



U.S. occupation of Afghanistan enters 12th year

By: Jason Pye – October 8th 2012

Back in 2009, the Cato Institute released a white paper in which Malou Innocent and Ted Galen Carpenter laid out a viable exit strategy for the United States to get out of Afghanistan. At that point, we had occupied the country – known as the “Graveyard of Empires” – for nearly eight years and there was detailed way produced by military leaders as to how and when we’d finally leave.

With 2,000 of our brave soldiers losing their lives and our occupation of Afghanistan entering its 12th year, the Taliban is mocking us as we have given up on “bringing democracy” to an untamable region:

America’s longest war entered its 12th year Sunday, with the anniversary marked by a Taliban statement claiming that NATO forces are “fleeing Afghanistan” in “humiliation and disgrace”.

The US led the invasion on October 7, 2001 to topple the Taliban government for harbouring Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

The Taliban were quickly routed, but launched an insurgency that grew in strength over the years until NATO had some 130,000 troops from 50 countries defending the Western-backed government of President Hamid Karzai.

The troops have now begun pulling out and all foreign combat forces will be gone by the end of 2014 according to a withdrawal schedule agreed by the US and NATO.

“With the help of Allah, the valiant Afghans under the Jihadi leadership of Islamic Emirate defeated the military might and numerous strategies of America and NATO alliance,” the Taliban said in a statement Sunday.

“And now after eleven years of unceasing terror, tyranny, crimes and savagery, they are fleeing Afghanistan with such humiliation and disgrace that they are struggling to provide an explanation”.

There is no question that our elected leaders lost focus early on, deciding to invade Iraq. Moreover, we didn’t learn from the lessons of the past with Afghanistan, including the resilience of the mujahideen. Despite giving the appearance of an anti-war candidate in 2008, Barack Obama increased our military presence in Afghanistan, hoping that a “troop surge” would pacify the Taliban. That proved to be a failure.

As military leaders look to the 2014 deadline, Americans should question why their leaders let these wars and occupations go on so long. We've literally gained nothing as leaders in Afghanistan have proven to be corrupt and unwelcoming to our presence. Not only that, there is a new report that the current government could fall after the 2014 deadline and U.S. forces leave.

Too steep a price has been paid, not only in terms of the fiscal affects of war, but also the brave men and women we've lost.