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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

March 30, 2018

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02.04.2018

Pentagon Desperate to Prove Progress Is Possible in Afghan War

As the US continues to escalate the war in Afghanistan, the official position is that there are no timetables anymore, no deadlines. 17+ years into the conflict, any pretense of a quick ending has long since evaporated.



Gen. Joe Dunford

That does not, however, mean that the Pentagon isn't feeling pressure, as preposterous claims of "progress" ring as hollow today as they did in 2004, or 2013, or any other time in the war. The US may feel comfortable committing to decades more of the same, but NATO allies that keep getting dragged in for a new escalation are increasingly skeptical that there is a real endgame.

Pentagon leaders are desperate to show that something is different this time around, and that they aren't just spinning their wheels in Afghanistan, even though that's really what's happening. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Joe Dunford insists that this year will be "fundamentally different" from the last 17 years of US war in Afghanistan.

Notably absent from Gen. Dunford's assurances is any concrete change. Instead he just vaguely claims that "the right people" are in place and that the US remains committed. It's hard to imagine that the Pentagon would've ever admitted to having the "wrong people" in place in Afghanistan in the last 17 years, however.

Claims of progress are unchanging throughout the Afghan War, and empty as ever, with less and less territory under the control of the Afghan government. The constant immediate goal of the Afghan War is, as ever, to maintain the illusion of progress, so as to prevent any up-swell in demand to end the conflict.