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Not Again, Mr. Obama! On ‘A More Expansive Mission’ in Afghanistan!

By Dr. Hakim

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President Obama has authorized "a more expansive mission for the military in Afghanistan in 2015 than originally planned".

Imagine that, like the late U.S. war veteran Jacob George, you're sent on this "more expansive mission". Your military helicopter is landing on farmland amidst mud-house villages, like a futuristic war machine inserted into an agricultural community in the Middle Ages.

There are no women to be seen.

They are in their kitchens or rooms, pleading for you, as well as the Taliban, not to come.

"The things that I participated in over there surely brought the farmers terror when we landed in their fields, crashing their crop. I remember running off a helicopter and looking into a man's eyes, and terror was what was looking back at me. It was as if a "devil" had just stumbled into his life. Actually, most of us are poor farmers killing poor farmers while people in our nations starve," Jacob had shared.

Like most people, my Afghan and American friends also wish for the Afghan conflict to be resolved, but not in this way:

Not through a "more expansive mission" to kill.

In 2011, Jacob George flew into Kabul, this time on Safi Airways.

"Please forgive me for my participation in the war," Jacob had asked of Ali and Abdulhai, two of the Afghan Peace Volunteers Jacob had met. He had pledged to ride his bicycle across the States, singing with his banjo, reaching out to people to end the war. It was going to be "A Ride to the End", with his songs put together in an album called "Soldier's Heart."

Three years later, on 19th of September 2014, Jacob George committed suicide.

Not again, only one option

An American official was quoted as saying that "the military pretty much got what it wanted", the "more expansive mission".

Obama is repeating the same mistake he made in 2009, when he ordered a troop surge for Afghanistan. Since the troop surge, the United Nations and the people of Afghanistan have experienced worsening security in Afghanistan. The number of civilian casualties, mainly children, has increased.

In Bob Woodward's book, *Obama's Wars*, Obama had asked his war cabinet in 2009, "So what's my option?... You have essentially given me one option.... It's unacceptable."

For 13 years in Afghanistan, literally only one option, an unacceptable option, has been exercised.

Imagine that you have heavy equipment strapped on your body and your adrenaline mixed with tender thoughts of loved ones back home.

You dare not ask whether there are any other options to the longest U.S. war in history.

You approach the impoverished homes of the "enemies".

Not again, ignoring public opinion

In 2009, 60 percent of Americans in an *ABC News-Washington Post* poll said that the war in Afghanistan is not worth fighting. Hillary Clinton had explained the troop surge then, "I'm well aware of the popular concern, and I understand it. But I don't think leaders – and certainly this president will not – make decisions that are matters of life and death and the future security of our nation based on polling."

In a CNN poll in December 2013, 82% of Americans opposed the Afghan War, making it even less popular than the disastrous Vietnam War!

Imagine soldiers in your own squadron gun down several Afghan "Fighting Age Males", and you briefly see little children dashing bare-footed across their paths, looking as if they have just seen ghosts.

You're aware that your own people no longer support the mission you're engaged in. You think, for just a moment: What is the Afghan public opinion about my military mission?

You don't know. No one has ever asked Afghans.

Not again, continuing the failed "war against terrorism"

Despite spending more than \$4,000,000,000 in the "war against terror", a Global Terrorism Database maintained by the U.S. government and the University of Maryland showed that the number of terror attacks in Afghanistan had been increasing over recent years.

The war against terror has failed!

In the book *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, Lieutenant-General Daniel Bolger said, "I am a United States Army general, and I lost the Global War on Terrorism. It's like Alcoholics Anonymous; step one is admitting you have a problem. Well, I have a problem. So do my peers. And thanks to our problem, now all of America has a problem, to wit: two lost campaigns and a war gone awry."

You crouch low against a crumbling wall of a village house compound. You let your bullets fly, as bullets also fly at you.

You steel your nerves amidst bated breath and the unintelligible screams of Afghan women, wondering in another lucid moment if your actions will make Afghans less "terrorist-like", less angry?

Not again, failing to see the suffering of Afghans, and American soldiers

You don't have time to digest the dire statistics.

Why is it that after 13 years of Operation Enduring Freedom, more than 4000 Afghans have set themselves on fire in 2014, and another 4000 have tried to poison themselves?

You recall some principles drilled into your training, that if necessary, you ought to "shoot everything that moves".

You get irritated because a few boisterous-looking teenage boys appear too defiant, standing in front of women in burqas and girls who are crying quietly.

You hear some shuffles in the next room, and you instinctively pull the trigger.

Back in the military camp, you're aware of the crisis of up to 22 U.S. veterans committing suicide every day.

Your heart, like the "Soldier's Heart" Jacob George describes in his music album, begins to suffer.

At a memorial service for Jacob in Arkansas, last October, a friend delivered this message from the Afghan Peace Volunteers:

"When Jacob came to visit us in Kabul, he sang his heart out for us, just like he did across the States for you. We may not remember the song, but his voice and spirit is what each of us wants, a spirit seizing peace within and without.

Jacob, thank you! Jacob, thank you for your kindness in asking forgiveness from the people of Afghanistan. Jacob, thank you for throwing your war medals back to NATO because you understood that those medals opposed the meaning of life! To Jacob's family, thank you for raising your child as a man who would not pretend that our world is okay.

Our world is not okay. That's why we in Afghanistan will try our best to continue Jacob's tune and ride so that our next generation can see an end not only to war in Afghanistan, but to war as a human method in the world."

In 2011, Jacob gave this video message to Ali, Abdulhai , Afghans and Americans, "To be perfectly honest, I feel that the U.S. government might not have the best interests of the people of Afghanistan in mind, although the soldiers are human, and there are charitable acts that come from being human. The ultimate goal does not look like peace. It resembles perpetual war."