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## Nothing Gained in Ten Years of Afghan War

By John Glaser

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Friday October 7, 2011 marks the ten year anniversary of the United States invasion of Afghanistan, considered by many as the nation's longest war. To date, [it has cost some \\$460 billion](#).

Hundreds of thousands of US troops have been sent to Afghanistan, many on multiple tours, nearly 1,700 of them are dead, tens of thousands are wounded, and [at least 20 percent of them have mental health problems](#). No organization or governmental body bothers to tally the total number of Afghan civilians killed directly from the war, but [it's known to be in the tens of thousands](#), not including millions displaced.

What anyone has gained from all this loss, is not clear. Currently, Obama's strategy is to continue an extensive, brutal military occupation of the country until at least 2014, although reports continue to surface that [US presence will continue for many years after that](#). Afghanistan's government, headed by the top American choice Hamid Karzai, is one of [the most corrupt](#) in the world [and continues to benefit from mountains of US aid](#).

Reports of [widespread torture in government-controlled Afghan prisons](#) has not prompted action from the Obama administration.

Local militias throughout the country are being funded, armed, and trained by the US despite being responsible for [grave violations of basic human rights](#). The militias, mainly the thuggish

[Afghan Local Police](#), get off scott free because of their connections to corrupt powerful individuals in government.

Night raids, one of the central strategies in Obama's war, have [increased many-fold, fuel resentment, and undermine US troops](#). An estimated 12 to 20 night raids now occur per night, resulting in thousands of detentions per year, many of whom are non-combatants. Senior commanders in the Joint Special Operations Command [claim](#) these raids get the wrong person 50 percent of the time. As one man from Nangarhar said in [a recent interview](#) "They claim to be against terrorists, but what they are doing is terrorism. It spreads terror. It creates more violence."

One of the principle effects of the Afghan war has been to push militants over the border into Pakistan, prompting the US to unleash a deadly drone war along the border that has [killed hundreds of children](#) and [many more hundreds of civilians total](#). It has also led to the proliferation of cross border kill/capture missions by the US, further destabilizing the country and damaging an already precarious alliance.

Nothing tangible has been gained from any of this. By most accounts, the war has [only exacerbated](#) the [terrorist threat](#) facing America by fueling hatred and fundamentalism. When [ninety-two percent of Afghans](#) have [never even heard of 9/11](#), the war is viewed as an unprovoked abuse. The memory, for example, of the family – including pregnant women and children – [murdered during a house raid by US troops](#), will reappear in the future as blowback.

In fact, the war was intended to be directly against US interests. Al Qaeda, [who planned to draw America into a long and costly war there](#), aimed to bleed the empire dry, believing they accomplished just that with the Soviets.

The feeble attempt to [withdraw troops was primarily symbolic and political](#) and was met with a violent insurgent response so as to make clear the US would not leave with peace and security. The point was well received, with military commanders conceding that [foreign presence will remain for the foreseeable future](#).

President Obama [will not give a speech marking this anniversary](#). His public focus, with the 2012 campaign in full swing, is decidedly about domestic issues and jobs for the American people. He understands that Afghans don't vote in American elections. Six in ten Americans, [according to recent polling](#), say the United States should not be involved in Afghanistan, but as is usual, they will vote themselves jobs and benefits.