

## GWOT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CIVILIANS

Jan EICHLER

eichler@iir.cz

Delivered 13-04-2011, accepted 09-12-2011.

Available at [http://www.population-protection.eu/ attachments/039\\_vol3n2\\_eichler.pdf](http://www.population-protection.eu/attachments/039_vol3n2_eichler.pdf).

### Abstract

*Global War on Terror has been waged for 10 years on the territory of two Islamic states – Afghanistan and Iraq. The military invasion of the USA and its allies is to overthrow the Taliban and Saddam Hussein dictatorships and open the way of these two countries towards democracy. But on the other hand, the military activities have had a lot of negative consequences for the local population. The number of the civilian victims is more than 100 000, the number of the refugees and IDP has reached 10 million and the conditions of the life in the camps are enormously bad. Another big problem is posed by the deterioration of the environment – especially deforestations, intoxication of deep waters and the air. Last but not least the health of the local population has been suffering. All these problems pose a lot of big challenges for the future.*

### Key words

*Bush Doctrine, war on terror, military operations, civilian victims, internally displaced people, refugees, camps, environment, health, compensations, apologies and challenges for the future.*

The main topic of this article is the impacts of these two waging wars on civilians. It concerns the two wars which were initiated by the administration of the 43<sup>rd</sup> USA president George W. Bush as a response to the terrorist attacks of 11-09-2001. The first of these wars started in autumn 2001 in Afghanistan, the second started in March in 2003 in Iraq. Both were the part of so called Global War On Terror – GWOT). They also became the mains results of the Bush Doctrine which was called Regime Change Policy and lay on four pillars.

The first pillar meant that as long as any regime is considered dictatorial and non-cooperative, it might be marked as a security threat to the USA and thrown down militarily, substituted by another one and a specific country might be for a certain period of time occupied militarily. The second pillar was the endeavour to push forward “new, forcible policy”. The third pillar means the decision to proceed unilaterally whenever it will be needed and finally the fourth pillar is based on the confidence that the stability and peace in the world require that the USA preserve its primary position in the world policy.<sup>1</sup>

### Two big wars within GWOT

The first regime classified into the category of serious threats which must be eliminated was the regime of the Taliban Emirate which provided the asylum for Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network al-Qaida. Al-Qaida then with their funds and weapons helped the Taliban gain control over the whole state territory including the ways of enormous drugs trafficking. On the turn of the century the Taliban gained control over 95 percent of the Afghanistan territory and introduced there a very repressive Islamist regime. Osama bin Laden, as a reward, gained an absolute freedom and “changed his organization al-Qaida almost into a virtual state.”<sup>2</sup>

#### *Afghanistan as a scene of the first war within the GWOT*

As a result of all these facts, Afghanistan became the first target of the American military strikes understood as a revenge for September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. It also became the scene of the first war led within the GWOT and the first country where so called Bush Doctrine was introduced. When considering the overthrow of the Taliban regime, the Bush Administration chose *the combination of air strikes with the actions of special forces and consequent activities of North-Atlantic alliance as internal armed opposition forces*. Therefore the USA the same way as during the operation Allied Forces in 1999 relied on “surgical raids” in the air. The raids started on 07-10-2001 and they completely destroyed the military structures of al-Qaida and Taliban especially 55<sup>th</sup> brigade which defended Kabul and was considered a specific strengthened Foreign Legion of Islamic extremists. Then the special squads discovered the shelters of the al-Qaida leaders and drove them away into a confined space. This way they prepared their siege and the following devastation.

The military attack on Afghanistan got the official name - Operation Enduring Freedom - OEF 2001). It took place in a vast, very rarely inhabited territory and against the enemy with very obsolete armament of little effectiveness. Thanks to this the Taliban government in Afghanistan was smoothly overthrown and the establishment of the president Karzai government followed. This way it was for the first time that the *Bush Doctrine Regime Change Policy* was practically applied. Therefore in the USA the discussion on another target, specifically on Iraq was initiated.

#### *Iraq as a scene of the second war within the GWOT*

**Military attack on Iraq started on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2003 under the name Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). It was then the second time when the highest representatives of the Bush administration of the USA put into the name of their operation so much valued word freedom.** Just the first day of fighting the USA Secretary of Defense declared that the strikes will have “the strength and range which have never been seen before”<sup>3</sup>. The setting of fighting units responded to this. Their main force was made of 424 000 soldiers from the USA, together with them 41 000 soldiers from Great Britain and 2 000 professionals from Australia were set<sup>4</sup>. On the opposite side there was the Iraqi army with the total number of 389 000 soldiers, 2 200 tanks, 3 700 armed vehicles.<sup>5</sup> The biggest weak

point of the Iraqi army was obsolete and unreliable armament as a result of a long term embargo.<sup>6</sup>

The keystone of the American approach to OIF was the overwhelming air force dominance. The main striking tools were precisely guided bombs and non-braking bombs, further of land and sea launched drone missiles. Totally there were 30 000 of them thrown down or launched which is the same number as during the operation Allied Forces in 1999 that, however, took three-times longer. To the direct support of ground forces there were also set four drones Predator.<sup>7</sup> In air raids totally 1 800 airplanes were set which flew up in average 1 000 times a day. During them the overwhelming air raid dominance was fully applied. In the course of this operation almost the same number of daily flights up (1 000 flights up) were marked as in case of the operation Desert Storm in 1991. The difference was in an increased proportion of precisely guided munition - in the case of OIF it was 68 percent<sup>9</sup>. There were launched almost 30 000 drone missiles, precisely guided air-raid munition and air-raid bombs. This munition is known for its precision of shots and huge destructive power.

The American and British pilots made totally 21 000 flights (90 percent of them fell on the American pilots)<sup>11</sup>, by which they completely destroyed the Iraqi air-defense, destroyed the Iraqi ground forces, decomposed the infrastructure of the Iraqi regime, command centers of the Iraqi army and the republican guards and a communication system. Thanks to the concentration of the overwhelming dominance of the most up-dated equipment they have achieved so far the most effective application of the strategy "shock and awe" aimed at the attacks which completely destroy the defensive and offensive potential of an enemy and paralyse their will to the resistance.

### **Political results of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq**

It is indisputable that both countries thanks to the interventions got rid of the dictatorial regimes which have belonged to the worst in the world. The Afghans got rid of the Taliban government, the Iraqis celebrated the fall of the hateful dictatorship of Saddam Hussain and his family. Local citizens during first weeks and months enjoyed the feelings of relief and liberation. Then the changes towards the worse have occurred. In Afghanistan the Talibans began to come back, in Iraq in places which were not under the direct control of the American or Allied soldiers, the everyday safety began to get worse and the number of people killed during ethnical violence grew.

### **The disastrous consequences for civilians**

Both wars which were initiated within the GWOT have had very heavy impacts on civilians. They are expressed by the high number of killed civilians, enormous flows of refugees and runners, the growth of the number of orphans, a

steep rise of criminality and violence, degradation of the environment. All these unfortunate phenomena have had an essential impact on a total success or failure of wars especially in a moral sphere where the so called fight of the hearts and minds of the local population has been waged. First of all the American politicians and soldiers in this connection use very often the expression “to win hearts and minds”.

#### *High numbers of civilian casualties*

The total number of killed civilians has been discussed in these both countries. According to some data there are almost 250 000 casualties, according to the lowest estimates it is 150 000 people altogether. Many of them were killed on their way to work or home, others became the victims of suicide attacks or remotely fired explosive mixtures IED. However, the highest number of killed civilians falls, both in Iraq and especially in Afghanistan, on air-raids of American pilots. Every year it is several thousands of civilians.<sup>12</sup>

The most cited case is an air-raid of American pilots during which 37 people were killed during a wedding feast in Afghan Kandahar. Irreversible damage to human lives was further augmented by the fact that no mourners got any compensation and none of American commanders have ever apologized to anyone.

The losses of civilian lives have also hard social impacts. A big shock for families is the loss of fathers who feed the family. Their places are substituted by the first-born sons, which means, that they grow up prematurely and ultimately finish school attendance. This causes the fall of proclaimed bearing effects of Western interventions which is together with spreading of democracy also the raising of education.

Another serious social problem of civil losses is the growth in the number of orphans. In Iraq and Afghanistan there are not the exact data about their numbers but it is supposed that in each of these countries there are tens of thousands of them.<sup>13</sup> It is a group which is extremely vulnerable both physically, and psychically. They mostly survive in shocking and harsh conditions in streets, they get the food in a better case through the doles, in a worse case through the violence within the organized crime which, in a such afflicted environment, just thrives. Of course, such cruel experience means for them a lifelong trauma. It gives them a hard stigma and places them into a growing number of children who lose education and will stay till the end of their life illiterate, in a better case semi-literate.

A high number of civilian victims of military operations has had two very unfavourable impacts. First of all at point of an attack the human suffering has been further raising, and therefore the feeling of disunion between allied troops and local population has been escalating. The losses on the side of civil population play up to anti-government forces let them be separatists in Iraq or Taliban in Afghanistan who categorical refuse any implementation of Western values in their countries.

And even more serious is the fact that unbearably high and still growing number of civil victims has been further lowering the prestige of the West itself not only in two belligerent countries but also in the whole Islamic world. It discredits

root and branch officially proclaimed idea of both military operations which should have been the spreading of freedom and democracy in the Islamic world.

*Runners and refugees as the most numerous afflicted group*

Another very oppressing consequence of military campaigns in two Islamic countries has been the high number of runners and refugees. Let us remember that the runners are those who flee within their own country and therefore they are marked IDP- Internally Displaced Persons. On the contrary, the refugees are the civilians who leave or are expelled to other countries.

As long as Iraq is concerned, their total number reached four million which means that every sixth person lost their home. And in Afghanistan the number of runners and refugees is even by 2 million higher. Together it is 10 million of people who have been from their homes either directly expelled by one of waging sides, or they flee from war awes, frequently literally at eleventh-hour, therefore without everything they had and what they will need for their other life.

For runners and refugees of these two wars there were built hundreds of camps, but all of them are overcrowded and insufficiently funded. In absolute majority of them there is a catastrophic lack of food, water, hygiene and feeling of privacy, elementary human dignity and basic safety. The stay in them has been changing in everyday fight for survival and their inhabitants, especially the young ones have become a sought-after hunting-ground for the extremist or even terrorist organizations.

Even worse is the situation of these runners who do not get into any of the camps. Thousands of such people survive in bombed out houses where is no water, electricity or any sewage system and garbage disposal. Such environment is the source of various infections, illnesses and epidemics. Absolute majority of such afflicted people do not have an employment and therefore they survive only thanks to forcible saturation of at least fundamental necessities of life. The suffering of civil population at points stricken by war is augmented by all above mentioned.

Very hard and undignified conditions dominate not only in the camps of runners on the territory of two states directly waging, but also in refugee camps which can be found in neighbouring Islamic countries which are Pakistan, Turkey and Iran (where especially the Afghans go to) or Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon (where the Iraqis take shelter). It means that the problem of refugees becomes the problem of an international character because they make neighbouring countries spend significant sums for the stay of refugees, especially for the provision of their safety. This can lead to further worsening of relations between states from which the refugees come and countries in which they take shelters.

*The degradation of the environment*

In the specification of unfavourable impacts of the military occupation of two Islamic countries we cannot omit the degradation of the environment and the impacts on human health. First of all it is a big growth of greenhouse gases which are especially released by tanks M-1 Abrams or armoured vehicles Bradley. Well,

such Abrams swallows 300 gallons (therefore more than 11 thousand of liters of fuel during an 8-hour military operation, whereas Bradley consumes one gallon (almost 4 liters) for only one mile.<sup>14</sup> According to American data, in these two wars 5 billion of barrels with fuel is spent every year. The result is the release of highly harmful substances into the air, soil and ground water which will have serious long-term impacts. As a result of the penetration of fuel and exhaust gases from boosters into the environment, the quality of ground water has been deteriorated. At points of extremely long and pointed fights, the number of cancer diseases has grown up as well as child mortality.<sup>17</sup>

Another shock for the environment is a risky growth of tree cuts which is substantial in Afghanistan as they have grown almost by a half<sup>18</sup>. Such unconsidered process has two serious consequences. The first one is the decrease of a retentive potential of the soil in areas afflicted by war which might cause floods with consequent arable land washing off. This causes the damage to the harvest followed by further lowering of the standard of living. The second unfavourable consequence of tree cuts is the increasing dustiness which leads to the growth of breathing ways disorders of the local population.<sup>19</sup>

### **New demands and pressure on the soldiers of intervening states**

One of the worst consequences of victims on the civilian side is the loss of not only their support but also the loss of an elementary understanding for the whole mission in itself. While evaluating both wars conducted within GWOT it is a serious loss in the field of the hearts and minds fight at local population. Moreover it proves that the soldiers of occupation armies are exposed to the pressure from the local for which they were not appropriately prepared before the missions. They are the following:

- It fully proved that especially in the Islamic world the local population after heavy losses caused by allied soldiers, mainly by pilots, require to give over the guilty persons. They require to give over those who are directly guilty persons of homicide or mayhem of their family members or neighbours;
- Further the mourners and family members require that the ones who caused the death or mayhem are immediately condemned;
- last but not least the commanders of occupying units face the requirements for financial damages for the families which lost their providers or which do not have any longer the sources of their living (workshops, farms, harvest, goods etc.).

Globally taken, the price for so called social engineering of Bush Administration is precariously high: 150 thousand of killed civilians, 10 million people who lost their homes, serious degradation of the environment, discrediting of the West in the eyes of many millions of Muslims. This all be it so for us a serious warning for the future.

## The Challenges for the Future

The losses of lives and health of civil population is a huge problem and a high price of each war. However, with all the losses and awes it is possible or even necessary to say that from the viewpoint of war victims, it is not a war as a war. In order to remain with the case of the USA as universally the strongest and most influential state of a current world, then it is a big difference between its policy during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and between the way how they fight in both wars in Islamic world.

### *It is not a war as a war*

In case of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War the strategic decisions of the highest political and defense actors and consequent fighting activities were assessed according to a final objective which was to beat the superpowers of the Axis and first of all contribute to the most rapid end of the whole war. Under this visual angle also bombing of big German or Japanese towns including dropping of two atomic bombs was assessed. These activities signified the break of the will to resistance and in case of Japan and its following capitulation, thanks to which it was not necessary to continue in heavy conventional fights which would have lasted at least six months and during which it would have been even more casualties than before in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

However, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are completely different. Their objective was to get these two countries off dictatorships, to open them the way to democracy, to prosperity, to higher education, to a better life. In such wars winning hearts and minds of the population at point of the intervention has the same value as the overthrow of dictators and the defeat of their armies. This means that every loss of lives and health of civil population has had heavy discrediting impacts.

### *Negative and positive challenges for the future*

Bitter experience from two Islamic countries has had basic significance in two main aspects respectively in a negative and a positive one. Firstly, it showed what it is necessary to meticulously avoid. This signifies that before any striking action both ground and air one, the best verified information about a point of intervention must be collected. The objective should be to attack military targets and limit as much as possible the probability that civilian targets will be hit, that there will be losses of human lives.

Secondly, it means lessons learned which imply how it is necessary to proceed in case of other interventions against dictatorial regimes. The component part of the preparation for any war, initiated with the objective to overthrow a dictatorial regime and improve the life of local population should be systemic preparation for the compensation of prospective damage and detriment caused to civilians.<sup>20</sup> Such preparation might have two basic pillars, respectively financial and psychologically-political.

A financial pillar would be undoubtedly the simplest. It might rest basically on the earmarking of certain financial budgets in case of larger damage caused to civilian population at point of the intervention. However, the second pillar would be substantially more complex and more demanding. It would be based on the fact that first of all it is necessary to teach the commanders how to proceed in cases when despite all the caution there are losses of lives of civil population. In this respect there are four main challenges for the nearest future.

First of all it is about how to negotiate with the local representatives. In the Islamic world it is the question of substantial civilization differences as it regards the people who are not elected the way the Western civilization is used to. Another big challenge is to teach the commanders to conduct fast and objective investigations in case of losses on the civil population side. In case of real losses on civilians' side it is important to know how to privately and publicly apologize to the mourners, disabled and their relatives. And finally it is important to learn how to provide fast and effective compensations to those who lost their cousins or they lost their source of living which their broad family is depended on.

### Résumé

*The above mentioned problems of wars in two Islamic countries pose a lot of very important challenges for the future. In the negative respect, they indicate what should be avoided: civilian victims during military, especially air operations, crowds of refugees and IDP, catastrophic conditions in refugee camps, negative impacts on the environment and on the health of civilian population. In the positive respect, the Western countries have to learn how to improve their relations with the local population, how to avoid the frustration of local population, how to present the apologies in case of civilian losses, how to provide the compensations for the victims or for their families.*

### NOTES:

---

<sup>1</sup> JERVIS, R. Understanding the Bush Doctrine. *Political Science Quarterly*, 2003, vol. 118, No. 3, p 375.

<sup>2</sup> SIMON, Steven, BENJAMIN, Daniel. The Terror. *Survival*, 2001, vol. 43, No. 4, p 10.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Defence: Archive. Daily brief 20 March 2003. Available at WWW: <<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Operation Iraqi Freedom- by the numbers USCENTAF report dated 30 April. Available at WWW: <<http://www.centaf.af.mil>>.

<sup>5</sup> USCENTAF report, 30 April 2003. Available at WWW: <<http://www.centaf.af.mil>>.

<sup>6</sup> GARDEN, Timothy. Iraq: the military campaign. *International Affairs*, 2003, vol. 79, No. 4, p. 712.

<sup>7</sup> GARDEN, Timothy. Iraq: the military campaign. *International Affairs*, 2003, vol. 79, No. 4, p. 708.



- <sup>8</sup> Department of Defence: Archive. Daily brief 20 March 2003. Available at WWW: <<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/>>.
- <sup>9</sup> USCENTAF report, 30 April 2003. Available at WWW: <<http://www.centaf.af.mil/>>.
- <sup>10</sup> GARDEN, Timothy. Iraq: the military campaign. *International Affairs*, 2003, vol. 79, No. 4, p. 708.
- <sup>11</sup> COTTEY, Andrew. The Iraq war: the enduring controversies and challenges. In *SIPRI Yearbook*. Stockholm: SIPRI, 2005, p. 74.
- <sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch, September 2008, p. 2.
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.childinfo.org/orphans.php>.
- <sup>14</sup> Col. Gregory J. Lengyel, USAF, Department of Defense Energy Strategy: Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks. 21st Century Defense Initiative. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, August, 2007, p. 10.
- <sup>15</sup> Associated Press, "Facts on Military Fuel Consumption". *USA Today*, 2 April 2008. Available at WWW: <[http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2008-04-02-2602932101\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2008-04-02-2602932101_x.htm)>.
- <sup>16</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. "United Nations Statistics Division - Environment Statistics." United Nations Statistics Division. Available at WWW: <[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/Questionnaires/country\\_snapshots.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/Questionnaires/country_snapshots.htm)>.
- <sup>17</sup> BUSBY, C., HAMDAN, M. and ARIABI, E. Cancer, Infant Mortality and Birth Sex-Ratio in Fallujah, Iraq 2005-2009. *Int. J Environ. Res. Public Health*, 2010, 7, 2828-2837.
- <sup>18</sup> GALL, Carlotta. War-Scarred Afghanistan in Environmental Crisis. *The New York Times*, January 30, 2003.
- <sup>19</sup> KENNEDY, Kelly. Navy researcher links toxins in war-zone dust to ailments. *USA Today*, May 14, 2011. Available at WWW: <[http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2011-05-11-Iraq-Afghanistan-dust-soldiers-illnesses\\_n.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2011-05-11-Iraq-Afghanistan-dust-soldiers-illnesses_n.htm)>.
- <sup>20</sup> Losing the People: The Cost and Consequences of Civilian Suffering in Afghanistan. Available at WWW: <[huffingtonpost.com/erica-gaston/losing-the-people-the-cos\\_b\\_170084.html](http://huffingtonpost.com/erica-gaston/losing-the-people-the-cos_b_170084.html)>.