

By Debra Sweet

From [World Can't Wait](#) | Original Article

From today's [Washington Post](#) : "U.S. air strikes targeting a convoy of buses traveling in southern [Afghanistan](#) killed at least 25 civilians and wounded a dozen more in a bombing that could fuel a political backlash against the ongoing military offensive in Afghanistan." Does anyone think we're getting a true picture of what's happening in Helmand Province during the US/NATO offensive in Marjah?

General David Petraeus, who runs the whole Euro/Asian military occupation "overseas contingency operation" as head of CENTCOM, says this battle is an "initial salvo" in a military campaign of 12 – 18 months. So much for U.S. forces leaving Afghanistan in mid-2011. This is

*just a start*  
of the U.S. offensive.

Petraeus, on [Meet the Press yesterday](#) was being interviewed on the offensive, and made a fascinating digression into the military price the US military has paid for "expedient measures," i.e. torture: "I have always been on the record, in fact, since 2003, with the concept of living our values. And I think that whenever we have, perhaps, taken expedient measures, they have turned around and bitten us in the backside. We decided early on in the 101st Airborne Division we're just going to—look, we just said we'd decide to obey the Geneva Convention, to, to move forward with that. That has, I think, stood elements in good stead.

"We have worked very hard over the years, indeed, to ensure that elements like the International Committee of the Red Cross and others who see the conduct of our detainee operations and so forth approve of them. Because in the cases where that is not true, we end up paying a price for it ultimately. Abu Ghraib and other situations like that are nonbiodegradables. They don't go away. The enemy continues to beat you with them like a stick in the Central Command area of responsibility."

So, in "living our values" so far, the US/NATO forces killed dozens of civilians during this offensive, including 27 yesterday when they bombed a truck convoy of people fleeing the

fighting.

The Telegraph UK reported in

[Afghan government condemns Nato air strike that killed 27](#)

, and noted also that “Last Thursday, a Nato bombing raid in the northern province of Kunduz killed seven Afghan policemen, according to hospital and government officials. On Feb 15, Nato acknowledged that five civilians were killed accidentally and two others wounded in an air strike in southern Afghanistan.”

While Petraeus tries to prepare the U.S. public for increasing loss of U.S. troops' lives, I must note that the loss of Afghan civilian's lives is 1) much greater than the number of US troops killed, and 2) usually of no consequence at all to US war planners, *except*

when they become “nonbiodegradable” (huh?) which the enemy “continues to beat you with a stick” over.

Kevin Gostzola takes this on in

[The Lying Language of Occupation: Murdered Civilians in Marjah are Human Beings, not “Human Shields”](#)

“military commanders claim civilian deaths are happening because the Taliban are using civilians as “human shields.” They are framed as purveyors of evil despite evidence and reports from organizations like Amnesty International which indicate that

[U.S. and NATO forces engage and have engaged in indiscriminate attacks](#)

(which are just as bad as using civilians as “shields”).”

It is uncertain how long this “surge” will last. The U.S. and NATO seem to be taking action to create the illusion that there is, in fact, justification for waging war and occupation in Afghanistan.

No matter how long this lasts, civilians will pay the highest price.

[Al Jazeera](#)

reports on the lives of people in the area:

[Civilians Flee Marjah Fighting](#)

. “We left with nothing, no blankets. We have only these scarves (we are wearing) to cover ourselves.”

Larry Everest gives the history of the US occupation in

[Surge of Violence: U.S. Launches Massive Offensive in Southern Afghanistan](#)

and concludes that

The U.S. position in Afghanistan is precarious. The war has bled into neighboring Pakistan, a key U.S. ally, which now faces its own growing Islamist insurgency and other deep and volatile internal and external contradictions. And the U.S. is facing real obstacles and challenges to its dominance in the Middle East (such as Iran) as well as globally. It is responding to these challenges by escalating its violence against the people.

Where's the outrage in the U.S. for civilian casualties? Some of it should be on display this week when anti-war groups mark the 1,000 U.S. death in Afghanistan. (The total today is 999).

The best gift to humanity would be to create the situation the people of the Netherlands have. The

[Dutch government collapsed this weekend](#)

because of mass opposition to Dutch troops being in Afghanistan at all. Their troops are leaving by the end of this year.

Even as President Obama is pressuring European governments to send more troops, people around the world are fed up with this occupation. And we should be, too!