

By Kenneth J. Theisen

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U.S. Secretary of War Robert Gates arrived in Afghanistan on Monday March 7th for a two day unannounced visit. He immediately stated that the U.S. and its puppet Afghan government have agreed to extend U.S. military involvement beyond the previously announced plan to end U.S. combat operations in 2014. This should come as no surprise to any of our readers.

Gates made his announcement at the huge Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. He said, "Obviously it would be a small fraction of the presence that we have today, but I think we're willing to do that. My sense is, they [Afghan officials] are interested in having us do that."

Gates arrival occurs at a time when the war-time atrocities of the U.S. are in the news and more controversial than in the recent past. Even puppet president Hamid Karzai has had to say that an apology from U.S. General David Petraeus, the commander of US and NATO forces in the country is "not enough" given the recent war crimes committed by U.S. forces against Afghan civilians, including many children. Nine children who were collecting firewood were killed just last week by U.S. helicopters firing on them. Gates is undoubtedly going to tell Karzai to shut up and go along with his puppet masters.

But Karzai is not making his statements out of some concern for Afghan civilians or because he wants to cut his strings being pulled in the U.S. He is doing so to maintain the fig leaf that he is not a puppet. Afghans are continuing to protest at least four massacres in just the past 3 weeks where civilians have been killed by the U.S. and its allies. Chants of "death to America" can be heard outside the presidential palace walls on a daily basis now.

The U.S. and its foreign allies maintain more than 150,000 troops in Afghanistan. There are also more than an additional 100,000 contractors on the Pentagon payroll. In addition tens of thousands of puppet Afghan troops are on the U.S. payroll. This vast killing machine does what it is paid to do – kill. And the victims are just as likely to be Afghan civilians as they are so-called terrorists.

While the Obama administration maintains that it will begin to drawdown troops starting this July, Gates has made it clear that the presence of U.S. troops will continue for years, if not forever if the U.S. imperialists have their way. Whether these troops will be designated as combat troops, advisors, or trainers does not matter. They are there to carry out the mission of the U.S. Empire. They invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Ten years later there is no end in sight for the U.S. occupation. There is also no end in site for the suffering of the Afghan people.

The U.S. Empire will not voluntarily leave Afghanistan. Only a vast movement of millions who oppose this occupation can force the imperialists to leave. Elections will not do it. Hoping will not do it. Only concerted action can make the imperialist empire leave this war-torn nation. Join World Can't Wait and others to do your part to assist the Afghan people to eliminate the scourge of imperialist war.