

## Obama falls victim to propaganda

by Eric Margolis via rialator - Edmonton Sun *Sunday, Jul 20 2008, 9:45pm*

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### **Before widening war in Afghanistan, there is much to consider**

Barack Obama wants to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq and send them to Afghanistan, which he calls the real front on the "war on terror." He also has repeated threats to attack Pakistan "if necessary." One understands Obama's need to sound macho. Rival John McCain has been beating his chest, proclaiming, "I know how to win wars." Polls show Americans trust McCain three to one over Obama as a war leader. Unfortunately, recent U.S. presidents seem to require small military conflicts to prove their political virility.



***Fraud and slave***

But Obama has long called the U.S.-led occupation of Afghanistan a "good war," a view most Americans and Canadians share. They see Afghanistan -- and now Pakistan -- as hotbeds of al-Qaida and Taliban terrorists that must be eradicated.

It is distressing to see Obama succumb to the blitz of war propaganda over Afghanistan and adopt George W. Bush's faux terminology of terrorism. Before Obama urges widening America's war there, he should consider:

- Al-Qaida never numbered more than 300 men. There are hardly any left in Afghanistan. Survivors scattered into Pakistan. Finding them is police and intelligence work, not a job for thousands more western troops.
- U.S. policy towards Afghanistan is driven by energy geopolitics. Pacification of rebellious Pashtun tribesmen is necessary in order to build energy pipelines south from the Caspian Basin. That is the primary strategic mission of U.S. and Canadian troops.
- Taliban fighters are not "terrorists." The Taliban was founded as a fundamentalist Muslim religious movement of Pashtun tribesmen to fight banditry, rape, drugs and Afghan Communists. The Taliban received millions in U.S. aid until four months before 9/11. It had no part in 9/11 and knew nothing about it. The U.S. overthrow of the Taliban resulted in the Communists resuming control over half of Afghanistan. Under U.S. occupation, Afghanistan has become a narco state that supplies over 90% of the world's heroin.

PACIFICATION

- Pashtun tribes comprise half of Afghanistan's population, and 15% of neighbouring Pakistan's people. The western powers are involved in an old-fashioned, colonial-style pacification campaign against the Pashtun Taliban. Imperial Britain, the Soviets, and now the U.S. and its allies all employed the same colonial strategy: Using puppet rulers, local mercenary troops, and lavish bribes to enforce their will. Afghans who resist get bombed.

- Before urging expansion of the Afghan war, Obama should total up the bill for America's military misadventures. As of last January, according to the Pentagon and data revealed under the Freedom of Information Act, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars cost 72,043 American battlefield casualties. Veteran's Administration hospitals have treated 263,909 veterans from these wars and registered over 245,000 disability claims.

No one knows how many Iraqis and Afghans have been killed. The number could be over one million. Just last week over 50 Afghans in a wedding party were killed by a U.S. air strike. But without the constant use of massive air power, including B1 bombers, the U.S. could not maintain its occupation of Iraq or Afghanistan.

- According to a Democratic congressional committee report, the two wars will cost \$1.6 trillion by the end of 2008, or \$16,500 per U.S. family of four -- not counting the cost of borrowing money to pay for the wars.

#### BOTH WRONG

Obama and McCain believe Afghan resistance can be crushed by more brute force. They are wrong. More western troops and more bombed villages will mean fiercer Afghan resistance.

The war is now seeping into Pakistan, a nation of 165 million. Obama's threats to attack Pakistan and go after its nuclear arsenal are reckless and extremely dangerous. He appears headed over the same cliff as those would-be "war presidents," Bush and McCain. As the head of NATO recently admitted, political settlement, not bombs, is the only way to end the unnecessary Afghan war.

Is Obama beginning to fall under the influence of the same military-petroleum complex that guided Bush's imperial-minded presidency?

Could Pakistan become a disaster for the Democrats as Iraq was for Republicans?

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