

DOES THE MILITARY HAVE A NEW GOAL OF HANGING AFGHANISTAN FAILURE ON OBAMA?

On Monday, I could only reply with the Twitter equivalent of uncontrolled laughter when Robert Caruso tweeted a quote from Stanley McChrystal, who was appearing on Morning Joe to hype the paperback release of his book. Responding to a question from Al Sharpton, McChrystal said, in Caruso's transcription, "the military doesn't have goals...we follow the policy of the nation".

Of course, as Michael Hastings so exquisitely documented, McChrystal and his band of merry operators had as their primary goal the advancement of their own careers while also promoting the concept of forever war. And as Gareth Porter points out, David (ass-kissing little chickenshit) Petraeus gamed Obama on the end date for the surge in Afghanistan, significantly extending the time of maximum troop presence (and maximum fund flow to contractors). It is equally important not to forget the Pentagon operation that places "analysts" with television news operations, somehow always finding analysts whose views align with Pentagon goals of forever war (and more purchases from the defense contractors who employ these same analysts when they go to the other side of the revolving door). Yes, Eisenhower foresaw all of this and yet we ignored his warning in 1961.

But somehow last night's headline from the Wall Street Journal seems on first blush to run counter to the concept of forever war. We are now told that the military's latest plan for a troop presence in Afghanistan beyond the end of this year (pending a signed BSA, which is certainly not a given) would be only 10,000 troops (a significant reduction from previous ideas that have been floated) and that these

troops would be drawn down to essentially zero in another two years, ending precisely with Obama's term in office. The Journal offered this by way of explanation:

The request reflects a far shorter time frame for a U.S. military presence in Afghanistan than commanders had previously envisaged after the current international mission ends this year. The new approach is intended to buy the U.S. military time to advise and train the Afghan army but still allow Mr. Obama to leave office saying he ended America's longest war, the officials said.

So the military is pitching this latest plan as being an opportunity for Obama to claim "success" in ending the war. But we all know that the effort in Afghanistan has been an abject failure that has achieved absolutely nothing beyond killing a huge number of Afghans along with far too many coalition troops while squandering an obscene amount of US money. Instead, this looks to me more like the military moving to try to hang its failure on Obama by not extending the quagmire into yet another presidential administration. And that view seems to me to be reinforced by the military's framing of Obama's options:

Military leaders told Mr. Obama that if he rejects the 10,000-troop option, then it would be best to withdraw nearly all military personnel at the end of this year because a smaller troop presence wouldn't offer adequate protection to U.S. personnel, said officials involved in the discussions.

The military wants this debacle to end during Obama's term no matter what, and you can bet that is because their goal is to blame him for their failure.

But lest we raise our hopes that sanity has finally broken out within the walls of the Pentagon and that the generals finally have learned to hate war, we have this gem from Reuters:

Afghanistan's government, increasingly at odds with Washington, is cracking down on advertisements that promote keeping U.S. troops in the country after 2014 and has already shut down a spot aired by the country's most widely watched broadcasters.

The commercials – some funded by a U.S. organization – have drawn official criticism because they urge President Hamid Karzai to abandon his refusal to sign a security pact with the United States that would enable the troops to stay.


And just what US “organization” has been funding the commercials that seek to prolong the US military's presence in Afghanistan? Why, that would be the US military itself:

Broadcasters were aware the spots were funded by ISAF or related groups, but saw “public service” advertising as a source of revenue.

Afghanistan's most popular channel, Tolo TV, said the spots were provided by a company called Ads Village, whose officials acknowledge the funds came from ISAF or U.S. state aid agency USAID.

But ISAF insists this is all just for educational purposes:

The ISAF declined to indicate how much it spends on advertising, saying: “Public information released... is intended to inform and educate the public on the mission and operations of



ISAF and our Afghan National Security
Forces partners.”

The Pentagon is just so addicted to propaganda that it will pay for anything that promotes more fighting and more purchasing of war equipment. But they will consider at least a brief pause and/or change of venue in order to try to pin one of its worst failures on the president it has spent years trying to manipulate. Everywhere else, though, expect full speed ahead from our forever war fanboys.