

Another decade of neo-colonial war in Afghanistan

By Peter Symonds

In the lead-up to next month's NATO summit in Lisbon, the Obama administration and its allies, confronting widespread anti-war sentiment at home, are attempting to dupe the public by claiming that the US/NATO combat role in Afghanistan will end by 2014, with troop withdrawals to begin next year.

Behind closed doors, however,

the talk is not of an end to the war, but rather of an open-ended, neo-colonial occupation.

In opening a debate on the Afghan war in the Australian parliament on Tuesday, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard spilled the beans. After noting that Afghan President Hamid Karzai expected to assume full responsibility for his country's security by the end of 2014, Gillard bluntly spelt out that the "transition process" would not

mean the end to the Australian military presence in Afghanistan.

"Let me be clear," Gillard said, "this [transition process] refers to the Afghan government taking lead responsibility for security. The international community will remain engaged in Afghanistan beyond 2014. And Australia will remain engaged. There will still be a role for training and other defence cooperation. The civilian-led aid and development effort

will continue... We expect this support, training and development task to continue in some form through this decade at least."

While ministers and officials in the US and other countries have spoken vaguely about a continuing military role in Afghanistan after 2014, Gillard is the first leader to declare that the US-led military occupation will continue for another decade—at least. Her repeated references to the "new interna-

tional strategy" highlight the fact that this is the Obama administration's plan. And if Australia, with its current, modest troop numbers of 1,550, intends to remain for another 10 years, then the US and its closest allies are preparing for a large military presence in Afghanistan into the indefinite future.

Taking her cue from Washington, Gillard justified the ongoing occupation by declaring Afghanistan must "never again become a safe haven for terrorists". However, the intensifying US-led war is not directed against Al Qaeda—according to the CIA, it numbers no more than 50 in Afghanistan—but against the "Taliban". The "enemy" are Afghans, predominantly Pashtun tribesmen, who are bitterly hostile to the continued foreign military presence that has wreaked death and destruction on the civilian population for more than nine years.

Suppressing "terrorism" means a never-ending neo-colonial war against the Afghan people.

Washington's "war on terrorism" was only ever a pretext for advancing US ambitions for dominance in the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia. The US strategy was drawn up well in advance of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the subjugation of Iraq in 2003 were part of broader plans for refashioning the Middle East and establishing a greater US presence in Central Asia. Now focussed on the challenge posed by a rising China, the Obama administration is not about to relinquish US footholds in Iraq or Afghanistan that could prove very useful in the future. His troop "surge" in Afghanistan, like that in Iraq, is aimed at securing a permanent US presence, including military bases, while ensuring the puppet Karzai regime and its army take on the lion's share of fighting to suppress the anti-occupation resistance.

If Gillard was a little more open about the US plans, it was only to demonstrate that her Labor government is in lockstep with Washington.

The Australian prime minister has already indicated that she might accompany her defence minister to the NATO conference in Lisbon where she would line up with Obama in pressuring other allies to make a similar open-ended military commitment. Canada has announced that it will be pulling its 2,800 soldiers out of Afghanistan by next year. Italy has set a deadline of 2014 for the complete withdrawal of its 3,300 troops.

Gillard is standing unequivocally on the US side, despite overwhelming domestic opposition to the war, in a bid to ensure full US support as Australia shores up its own strategic position in the South West Pa-

cific.

Next month's haggling over the "transition process" at the NATO conference in Lisbon has been preceded by a preparatory gathering in Rome this week on Afghanistan. US special envoy to Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke insisted that the Lisbon conference would not lay out a timetable for specific provinces to be handed over to Kabul's military control. He also emphasised that "transition" did not equal troop withdrawals, confirming that the US would be pressing for long-term military commitments.

Leading up to the Lisbon conference, the US has been at pains to stress the advances being made through the troop surge. In the *Washington Post* for instance, US officials claimed that the aggressive military campaign in recent months has killed or captured hundreds of Taliban leaders and more than 3,000 fighters, forcing some insurgent groups to consider negotiations with the Karzai government. They spoke of "pockets of security" in former Taliban strongholds where schools have been reopened and bazaars are bustling.

The slaughter of Taliban leaders and fighters, particularly in the current offensive around the southern city of Kandahar, is largely the result of intensified special forces operations. Like the reign of terror from aerial bombing, these assassination squads are notorious for killing civilians, thus adding to the bitterness and hatred among Afghans toward the occupation of their country and the corrupt puppet regime in Kabul. The so-called pockets of security in the south—the product of the expansion in foreign troop numbers to 150,000—are paralleled by reports of escalating insurgent attacks in the country's north.

The optimistic note being sounded by Obama administration and its camp followers like Gillard cannot hide the fact that nine years of war have proven to be an unmitigated disaster for the Afghan people. According to very conservative UN estimates, at least 14,000 civilian deaths are directly attributable to the military conflict.

The military occupation is propping up a venal regime in Kabul that is notorious for corruption and ballot rigging. The majority of population is still mired in poverty and lack access to elementary services such as electricity, education and health care.

The only way to end this criminal war and allow the Afghan people to decide their future is to demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign troops and the payment of tens of billions of dollars in war reparations. WSW



Republic of Namibia

MINISTRY OF LANDS AND RESETTLEMENT

VACANCIES

DIVISION: SOUTHERN REGION

Post Designation	:	1 x Development Planner Grade SP2
Salary Scale	:	N\$105 975 x 3 855 – 121 395
Salary Notch	:	N\$105 975 p.a.
Benefits	:	Housing allowance N\$4 800 p.a. Transport allowance N\$5 040 p.a.
Duty Station	:	Keetmanshoop
Minimum Requirements	:	An appropriate 3 year Diploma in Land Management / Land Use Planning (or equivalent qualification)

NB: Preference will be given to applicants in possession of sound knowledge in mapping software understanding in GIS, Iiwis, ArcGis, GeoMedia and Arch-Explorer etc. Driving license will be an added advantage.

Additional Requirements	:	Sound knowledge on project formulation and funding
	:	Sound knowledge in vegetation survey
	:	Computer Literate

Post Designation	:	1 x Clerk Grade SP2
Salary Scale	:	N\$105 975 x 3 855 – 121 395
Salary Notch	:	N\$105 975 p.a.
Benefits	:	Housing allowance N\$4 800 p.a. Transport allowance N\$5 040 p.a.
Duty Station	:	Mariental
Minimum Requirements	:	A National Diploma in Land Management (or an equivalent qualification)

NB: Preference will be given to applicants with knowledge of Geographical Information Systems (GIS), verification and mapping of communal land rights and lease hold rights applied for registration in communal areas and the ability to speak indigenous languages of the region in which the post exist. Driving license we will be advantage.

Responsibilities:	- Coordinate the implementation of the Communal Land Reform Act in Region
	- Provide administrative support to Communal Land Board
	- Serve as Secretary to Communal Land Board
	- Serve as link between the Communal Land Board and Traditional Authorities with regard to the Administration of communal lands
	- Coordinate regional activities related to the management and administration of communal lands
	- Assist with the establishment and maintaining communication and service delivery channels with other stakeholders
	- Implementation of ministerial policies, plans and programmes at regional level
	- Any other duties as may be assigned from time to time

Benefits: Remunerative package(s) consists of a monthly salary according to the above-mentioned salary scale(s), housing subsidy/rent allowance/housing allowance/transport allowance (if applicable), pension, social security and medical aid benefits.

NB: Candidacy is limited to Namibian citizens; women and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply; Applications must be completed on form 156043, which are obtainable at any Government office, with certified copies of qualifications, identity documents and CV attached to it; and All foreign qualifications must be submitted with an evaluation of qualification from Namibia Qualifications Authority

Enquiries: Mr. Clement Kwala (Mariental & Keetmanshoop)
Telephone: 063 – 222 868

Applications must be forwarded to: The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, Private Bag 13343, WINDHOEK

Closing date: 22 November 2010