



Written by on March 16, 2009

Taliban Militants Hit NATO Supply Convoy

The convoy was destined to travel a route from Peshawar — the capital of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) — through the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan. The route accounts for about 75 percent of supplies transported to NATO forces in Afghanistan. The supplies are shipped to northwest Pakistan after being unloaded at the port city of Karachi.



It was the second attack against NATO supplies in northwest Pakistan in two days. Just the day before, militants armed with automatic weapons and rockets attacked the Pak-Afghan Container Terminal on the outskirts of Peshawar.

"Taliban militants fired four rockets on a truck terminal on the ring road on the city's outskirts and destroyed eight trucks completely," local police official Gohar Khan told Agence France Presse (AFP). "The militants also torched 12 more trucks and trailers."

An AP report quoted terminal security guard Janab-e-aali, who said that the attackers overwhelmed the terminal's security guards, then threw gasoline over 10 container trucks carrying supplies, setting off explosions. "They disarmed all the guards and warned us not to be smart, they snatched our weapons too," said the guard.

The increasing frequency of Taliban attacks on the Pakistan-Afghanistan supply routes has caused U.S. and NATO military commander to seek alternate routes. Speaking at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels on March 5, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton indicated that an important motivation for U.S. efforts to normalize relations with Russia is to secure Russian cooperation for NATO's expanding military operations in Afghanistan: "We can and must find ways to work constructively with Russia where we share areas of common interest, including helping the people of Afghanistan, arms control and nonproliferation, counter-piracy and counter-narcotics and addressing the threats posed by Iran and North Korea," said Clinton.

Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's envoy to NATO, echoed her sentiments, stating: "We need to get down to business fast to ensure stability and security in Afghanistan." Rogozin noted that his nation had already demonstrated its willingness to help the NATO effort by cooperating in the shipment of supplies through its territory bound for the alliance's troops in Afghanistan.

With the projected buildup of U.S./NATO forces in Afghanistan, the logistics of supplying the operation has become increasingly important. During a visit to Afghanistan on January 10, then-Vice President-elect Joseph Biden met with Gen. David McKiernan, the commander of the NATO-led forces in the nation. Gen. McKiernan told Biden that more helicopters, engineers, military police, and other resources would be needed for 20-30,000 additional U.S. troops projected to be sent to Afghanistan later this year. One more obstacle to the supply problem was created when Kyrgyzstan's parliament voted on February 19 to evict U.S. personnel from Manas air base, the last remaining U.S. air base in



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Central Asia used as a supply transit point to Afghanistan.

As noted in our January 21 article "[Petraeus Prepares for Afghan Military Buildup](#)," General David Petraeus, commander of the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in the Middle East, made stops in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, on his way to meet with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on January 20-21. Before that meeting, Petraeus announced that arrangements had been made to establish new transport routes into Afghanistan from the central Asian region where those nations are located.

Two days later, speaking to reporters from Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, where he had been having talks with Uzbek President Islam Karimov, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said that his government is receptive to cooperation with the United States and NATO in opening up new supply routes. (Uzbekistan expelled U.S. troops from the base on its territory in 2005 in a dispute over human rights issues, leaving Manas as the only U.S. military facility in the immediate region.)

"Let us hope the new U.S. administration will be more successful in the Afghan settlement than its predecessor," said Medvedev. "We are ready for fully fledged and equal cooperation on security in Afghanistan, including with the United States. We are ready to work on the most complicated issues ... including the transit of nonmilitary goods."

There are many reasons why Americans should be wary of our increasingly involvement in Afghanistan. The most important of them is that our Constitution gives Congress the exclusive power to declare war, and Congress has not declared war since December 1941.

Additionally, our nation's Founders were opposed to using our military for foreign adventurism, believing that our military existed to protect only our own nation, not the world. Perhaps the best summary of this principle was stated by John Quincy Adams, who said that America "goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own."

While adhering to this principle would have precluded our involvement in virtually every foreign war in which our nation was engaged since Adams spoke those words in 1821, the prospect of becoming bogged down in Afghanistan should raise even more red flags than past engagements.

Great Britain was involved in three Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-42, 1878-80, and in 1919). Though, with the help of Indian troops, Britain managed to occupy Afghanistan at various times, Britain's mission in the mountainous nation never seemed to be concluded, until King Amanullah Khan acceded to the throne in 1919 and Afghanistan regained its independence. During the first Anglo-Afghan war, Britain suffered over 7,000 killed and wounded, it suffered 2,500 casualties in the second war, and approximately 1,000 in the third war.

Many more people recall the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979-1989. During that war, the Soviets committed 115,000 troops, of which approximately 15,000 were killed. Approximately one million Afghan civilians and combatants died in the war. Both British and Russian troops in Afghanistan suffered many casualties due to cholera.

The noted British poet and chronicler of British imperialism, Rudyard Kipling, made note of Britain's foray into Afghanistan in his poem, "The Young British Soldier." It's final stanza reads:

When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,
And the women come out to cut up what remains,



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Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.
Go, go, go like a soldier,
Go, go, go like a soldier,
Go, go, go like a soldier,
So-oldier of the Queen!

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