

OVER \$80 BILLION WASTED IN “TRAINING” IRAQI, AFGHAN FORCES: NO LESSONS LEARNED

There simply is no level of duplicity that Iraqi or Afghan military leaders can engage in that will lead to the US re-examining the failed assumption that “training” armed forces in those countries will stabilize them. Between the two efforts, the US has now wasted over \$80 billion and more than a decade of time just on training and equipping, and yet neither force can withstand even a fraction of the forces they now face.

The latest revelations of just how failed the training effort has been are stunning, and yet we can rest assured that they will be completely disregarded as decision-makers in Washington continue to pour even more money into a cause that has long ago been proven hopeless.

Consider the latest revelations.

We learned yesterday that a cursory investigation in Iraq has already revealed at least 50,000 “ghost soldiers”:

The Iraqi army has been paying salaries to at least 50,000 soldiers who don't exist, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said Sunday, an indication of the level of corruption that permeates an institution that the United States has spent billions equipping and arming.

A preliminary investigation into “ghost soldiers” – whose salaries are being drawn but who are not in military service – revealed the tens of thousands of false names on Defense Ministry rolls, Abadi told parliament Sunday. Follow-up investigations are expected to uncover “more and more,” he added.

We can only imagine how much larger the total will become should Iraq actually follow through with a more thorough investigation, but already one Iraqi official quoted in the article hinted the monetary loss could be at least three times what is now known. But that isn't even the worst condemnation of US practices in this report. Consider this quote that the Post seems to consider a throw-away since it is buried deep within the article:

“The problems are wide, and it’s an extremely difficult task which is going to involve some strong will,” said Iraqi security analyst Saeed al-Jayashi.
“Training is weak and unprofessional.”

So the glorious training program in Iraq, which was proudly under the leadership of ass-kissing little chickenshit David Petraeus when it was being heralded, is now finally exposed as “weak and unprofessional”. And the US will do exactly diddly squat about these revelations. Recall that last week we learned that the Defense Department does not consider reducing corruption to be part of their role as advisors in Iraq. I’ll go out on a limb here and predict that when confirmation hearings are held for a new Secretary of Defense, there won’t be a single question aimed at asking how our current training program will be improved to avoid the failures that have been so clearly demonstrated in the previous attempts.

The situation in Afghanistan, although it is receiving less attention, is no better. Reuters reported yesterday on how poorly equipped Afghan forces are for dealing with the Taliban, despite over \$60 billion that the US has spent to train and equip those forces:

Afghan district police chief Ahmadullah Anwari only has enough grenades to hand out three to each checkpoint in an area of Helmand province swarming with Taliban insurgents who launch almost daily attacks on security forces.

“Sometimes up to 200 Taliban attack our checkpoints and if there are no army reinforcements, we lose the fight,” said Anwari, in charge of one of Afghanistan’s most volatile districts, Sangin.

“It shames me to say that we don’t have enough weapons and equipment. But this is a bitter reality.”

The article goes on to utterly destroy the ridiculous statements from Joseph Anderson, commander of ISAF Joint Command, back on November 5. Despite Anderson claiming that Afghan forces “are winning”, Reuters points out that claims that the ANSF remains in control of most of the country are grossly overstated:

And while the coalition says Afghan forces control most of the country, the reality on the ground can be very different.

Graeme Smith, senior Kabul analyst for the International Crisis Group, says that in many remote districts, the government controls a few administrative buildings “but the influence of Afghan forces may not extend far beyond that point”.

And yet, despite this clear history of failed efforts to train and equip forces, the US now plans to spend more than another \$5 billion fighting ISIS. If it weren’t for the carbon dioxide that would be released, it would probably be better for all of us if that money were simply incinerated.