

Afghanistan war marks 10 years quietly

CNN ONLINE

The US-led war in Afghanistan marked its 10th year yesterday having passed two major milestones: The Taliban has been forced out of power and Osama bin Laden is dead.

But there was little observance by US troops in Afghanistan, where a month earlier many participated in commemorations to mark the 10th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"We really celebrated the 10th anniversary of 9/11, and we were out here in Afghanistan," Marine Corps Maj Gen John Toolan Jr, commanding general of ISAF troops in southern Afghanistan, told reporters during a briefing on Thursday.

"I think that to us it was a far more significant date than 10 years of fighting in Afghanistan because, really, when you look at the 10 years, you're looking at different levels of forces, different levels of attention given to Afghanistan."

The US-led war in Afghanistan began October 7, 2001, with an air campaign that was followed within weeks by a ground invasion. President Barack Obama has called it "the longest-

running war in the nation's history".

The aim was to oust the Taliban and dismantle al-Qaeda's leadership, though the leaders of both groups -- Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden -- managed to escape capture.

Bin Laden was killed in May during a raid by US commandos on his hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The whereabouts of Mullah Omar is unknown, and he has not been seen in public in years.

As the United States turned its attention toward Iraq, insurgent violence in Afghanistan flared against Afghan civilians and security forces as well as the US and its coalition partners.

More than 2,700 troops from the United States and its partners have died during the 10 years of war, according to a CNN count. Of those, 1,780 were American, 382 were British and 157 were Canadian.

Since the conflict began, the number of casualties has risen by the year, with a significant jump from 2008 to 2009. At least 296 coalition troops died in 2008.

It nearly doubled in 2009 when 517 coalition troops were killed. That year, President Barack Obama authorised a surge of 33,000 US forces to



Demonstrators fly a giant kite near Big Ben in central London, as they protest to mark the 10th anniversary of the military intervention in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan to combat the violence.

Two years later, the United States outlined its plan to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, beginning with pulling the 33,000 surge troops by the end of 2012 and the remaining 68,000 by the end of 2014.

The move was followed by with-

drawal announcements by most of the NATO nations.

On Thursday, defence ministers from the 49 nations that make up the International Security Assistance Force pledged their support to Afghanistan even as they make plans to withdraw troops by 2014.

"Let there be no mistake: transition is not departure. We will not take our leave when the Afghans take the lead," Nato Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told reporters Thursday in Brussels, Belgium.

The ministers are scheduled to meet again in May in Chicago where Rasmussen said they will "need to decide what more we will do."

The planned withdrawal has raised a number of questions about the stability of Afghanistan, which has been hit by a wave of high-profile attacks in recent months that have jeopardised the peace negotiations.

Last month's turban bomb assassination of former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, revered by many as a father of the Mujahideen movement that ousted the Soviets in the 1980s, appears to have dealt the biggest blow to the peace process.

Rabbani was the chairman of President Hamid Karzai's High Council for Peace, which has been trying for a year to foster dialogue with the Taliban -- a strategy that Karzai publicly abandoned following Rabbani's killing.

The war in Afghanistan, once

viewed by a majority of Americans as a must, has become widely unpopular as concerns have shifted to the economy and job losses.

In a new Pew Research Center report on war and sacrifice released this week, half of post-9/11 veterans said the Afghanistan war has been worth fighting. Only 44% felt that way about Iraq, and one-third said both wars were worth the costs.

Robert Messel is among those veterans who question the war.

Messel, who was a freshman in college and a ROTC student on September 11, 2001, said he remembers thinking that the war in Afghanistan would be over before he joined the Army.

But as the war continued, Messel said he began to have mixed feelings.

"In my opinion, it basically should have been limited to what we initially were going in to do: Hunt down bin Laden and the architects of the attacks," he said.

"You lost friends and made sacrifices. You don't want to ever think that everything that happened was in vain," he said.

Karzai admits security failure

REUTERS, Kabul

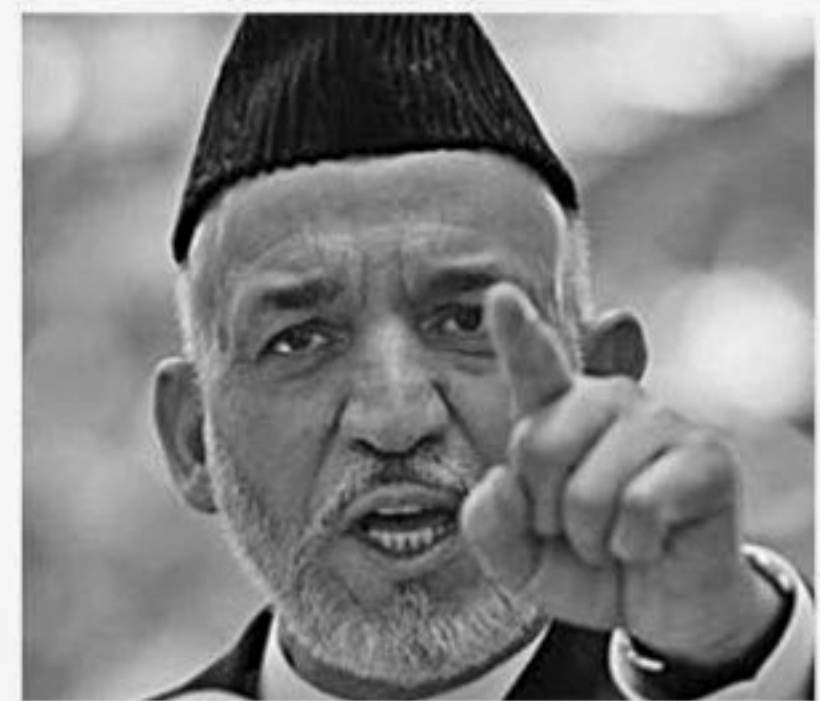
Afghan President Hamid Karzai, in an interview broadcast on the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the US military campaign, said his government and its foreign backers had failed to provide ordinary Afghans with security.

Karzai also said he had not ruled out talks with the Taliban insurgents believed to be behind last month's assassination of his top peace envoy, former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, but would only negotiate if the Taliban named a representative.

"We've done terribly badly in providing security to the Afghan people, and this is the greatest shortcoming of our government, and of our international partners," Karzai said in an interview with the BBC, broadcasted yesterday.

Civilian casualties in the first half of the year were the highest since the 2001 ouster of the Taliban, and "security incidents" in the first eight months of the year were 40 percent higher than in 2010, according to UN data.

Karzai, who has ruled Afghanistan since 2002, said he believed the coun-



try could still see an improvement in security as foreign troops head home. All foreign combat troops are due to be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

"We don't know, it might get better, if we concentrate on the right items, as far as security is concerned," he said, adding that the removal of insurgent sanctuaries in Pakistan was critical to beating the Taliban.

Karzai has been outspoken about apparent Pakistani links to the assassination of Rabbani, whose killer pretended to be a Taliban peace envoy, and told the BBC he believed the militant

group was entirely controlled by Pakistan.

"Definitely, the Taliban will not be able to move a finger without Pakistani support," he said, without specifying if he meant the army, the civilian government, the feared ISI intelligence agency, or another part of the state.

But he said he would return to talks, if he could meet people who clearly identified themselves as Taliban delegates.

"We have not said that we will not talk to them. We have said we don't know who to talk to, we don't have an address. The moment we get an address for the Taliban, (is) the moment we will talk to them."

Apart from Rabbani's killer, there has been at least one other man who falsely claimed to be a key Taliban representative and last year met senior foreign and Afghan officials before being exposed.

Analysts say Pakistan sees Afghan militants as strategic assets that serve as a counterweight to the growing influence of old rival India in Afghanistan.

FLOOD IN THAILAND Bangkok in danger

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's prime minister warned yesterday that Bangkok was under threat from the country's worst floods in decades as the authorities stepped up efforts to protect the capital and key industrial areas.

"The flooding situation is now considered a serious crisis," Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra said in a nationally televised address.

"It is going to directly affect Bangkok."

Many residents in affected areas have ignored the government's appeal to evacuate to safe areas, preferring to stay and guard homes submerged by the rising waters, which have left 252 people dead.

US pressure makes Afgan crisis worse

Says Pakistan

REUTERS, Islamabad

President Barack Obama's warning to Islamabad over suspected ties to militants will only fuel anti-Americanism and make it harder for Pakistan to support US efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, a senior senator said yesterday.

Pakistan is seen as critical to bringing peace to neighboring Afghanistan, but the United States has failed to persuade it to go after militant groups it says cross the border to attack Western forces in Afghanistan.

"This is not helping either the United States, Afghanistan or Pakistan," Salim Saifullah, chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, told Reuters.

"There will be pressure on the (Pakistan) government to get out of this war," he said, referring to the U.S. war on militancy.

Obama warned Pakistan Thursday that its ties with "unsavory characters" had put relations with the United States at risk, as he

ratcheted up pressure on Islamabad to cut links with militants mounting attacks in Afghanistan.

His comments are likely to deepen a crisis in the strategic alliance between the United States and Pakistan.

Obama accused Pakistan's leaders of "hedging their bets" on Afghanistan's future, but stopped short of threatening to cut off U.S. aid, despite calls from lawmakers for a tougher line over accusations that Pakistani intelligence supported strikes on U.S. targets in Afghanistan.

Pakistan says it has sacrificed more than any other nation that joined America's global "war on terror" after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, losing 10,000 soldiers and security forces, and 30,000 civilians.

But its performance against militants operating from its unruly tribal northwest border region is a frequent source of tension between Washington and Islamabad.

Maoists kill 4 troops in India

BCC ONLINE

A landmine blast by suspected Maoist rebels in India's Chhattisgarh state has killed four paramilitary troops and injured several others, police said.

Forces from Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), one of India's armed police units, were travelling through conflict-torn Bastar region when their vehicle hit a mine.

The mine had been planted in the middle of a road on the national highway.

Maoist rebels say they are fighting for the rights of indigenous tribal people and the rural poor.

Police told the BBC's Salman Ravi in Raipur that the troops were on their way from the volatile district of Dantewada to Jagdalpur town when their vehicle hit the mine.

"This unit was deployed for anti-Maoist operations in Dantewada," police officer Surjit Singh said.

"The blast was powerful and the vehicle has been badly damaged."

Don't vote for Congress

Hazare appeals to voters

IANs, New Delhi

In a fresh appeal, social activist Anna Hazare yesterday urged people in Hisar in Haryana not to vote for the Congress in the Oct 13 Lok Sabha by-election, alleging that the party is not committed to passing the civil society's Jan Lokpal Bill.

"I appeal to the people of Hisar not to vote for the Congress party and their candidate should be defeated as the party is not committed to passing the Jan Lokpal Bill," Anna Hazare said in a video message posted on YouTube.

The 74-year-old activist said he had some time back written to all the political parties seeking their support on the Jan Lokpal Bill.

"Most of the parties, including Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), replied to me affirming their support but I have not received any communication from the Congress," he said.

Hazare said he would call off his anti-

Congress campaign if the party commits to passing the Jan Lokpal Bill in the winter session of parliament.

"If Congress is committed to passing the Jan Lokpal bill, then we would not hold any agitation. Instead, we would appeal to the people to check the antecedents of the candidates and vote for the good ones," he added.

The 10-minute video shows footage of Hazare's movements in the capital.

The video was released to the media by India Against Corruption, an NGO that has been spearheading the movement. The NGO said its convener Arvind Kejriwal will campaign in Hisar in support of the Jan Lokpal Bill till Oct 10.

"Defeat the Congress party in this election and this will send a message that if the Jan Lokpal Bill is not passed in the winter session, the party would be defeated in all other elections," said Kejriwal.

No charge sheet yet

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procession at Bonpara Bazar in Natore. They beat Babu, also the president of BNP Bonpara municipality unit, to death and injured around 30 others.

Among the injured were Bonpara Municipality Mayor Ishaq Ali and three journalists. Babu's wife Mohua Noor Kochi filed a murder case against 47 people the following day.

An autopsy on the body revealed severe head injuries and cuts in hands and legs and beating wounds all over the body.

Police officials claimed the investigation is on the right track as the case has been shifted to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) from the Detective

Branch.

Contacted, Ahammad Ali, assistant superintendent of police at Rajshahi CID, said the investigation is in progress. "We are dealing with the case carefully as it is a very important one and it might take time to file the chargesheet."

Meanwhile, police yesterday obstructed BNP activists from raising a stage at Bonpara Bazar to arrange a memorial rally this afternoon, claimed Ruhul Quddus Talukdar Dulu, president of Natore BNP.

The local AL, though, has declared to hold a counter rally at the same place and time.

A High Court bench on March 13 issued a suo moto rule asking the 11 accused to explain within two weeks why their bail should not be

cancelled. The same bench granted bail to them on March 6.

The court directed the Natore superintendent of police to enquire into an allegation that the accused after being released from jail threatened the plaintiff of the case. The bench also asked the SP to submit the enquiry report within two weeks.

Meanwhile, prime accused in the case and AL-backed candidate KM Zakir Hossain has been elected mayor of Bonpara municipality beating BNP favourite Mohua Noor Kochi, the widow of Babu.

Another accused Khokor Mollah has been elected Majhgram union parishad chairman in Baraigram upazila.

WB takes hard line on graft The cult of Steve Jobs

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INT interviewed all pre-qualified bidders in the project who revealed the "offers" made by the minister's firm.

Last Wednesday, Finance Minister AMA Muhith told the daily Prothom Alo New York correspondent in an interview at the JFK Airport VIP lounge, "They [WB] talked of corruption in the communications ministry, but would not make public the names of the alleged corruptionists before completing the probe."

Muhith also expressed concern over the Padma Bridge project.

The project will require \$2.9 billion. The WB Board approved \$1.2 billion and committed to provide an extra \$300 million later. Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank and Japan are the co-financiers.

Earlier this year, the government sent a list of five pre-qualified bidders to WB for consent. Of them, the lowest bidder was Canadian company SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. However, WB has

not yet approved the list.

The Canadian authorities are investigating SNC-Lavalin Group Inc for corruption following a WB complaint.

WB Vice-president Isabel M Guerrero during a sudden visit to Bangladesh in mid-September held a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for around two hours. An official of INT was also present during that meeting, the sources said.

Guerrero told the Bangladesh government that the bank cannot approve the list of pre-qualified bidders until the Canadian authorities settle the allegations against SNC-Lavalin, the finance minister told journalists after the meeting between the prime minister and Guerrero.

Muhith said, "We cannot wait for an indefinite period. We have told them [World Bank] to officially give us the names of the companies accused of corruption. The government will drop those from the short-list and start the construction."

At that meeting, Guerrero

said the bank will take its decision after discussing the matter at its headquarters in Washington.

The sources said WB in its recent letter clearly informed the government about its position. WB funding will depend on the government's decision about the corruption allegation, the sources added.

Meanwhile, some quarters have been saying that the government's position regarding Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank is a reason behind WB's objections regarding the project. A high official of the finance ministry however told The Daily Star if that was so, the WB Board would not have approved the \$1.2 billion loan.

The Awami League-led alliance government in its electoral pledge promised to construct the Padma Bridge during its tenure. However, after the leading financier's objections, financing from other donors might also become uncertain, the sources said.

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a friend to the millions of people who owned his product.

In reality, they knew very little about him.

"He was incredibly secretive and private. You'd be hard-pressed to find a picture of him and his kids, hard-pressed to hear him talk about anything but Apple products," says Leander Kahney, author of Inside Steve's Brain, a biography of Jobs.

That Jobs never revealed much about his politics or his personal life also meant that he could never disappoint fans' preconceived notions.

"Because he was mysterious, people could project their own ideas on to him, and he could be a lot of things for a lot of people," says Kahney, who runs the website Cult of Mac and wrote a book of the same name.

MAN OF MYSTIQUE

Jobs's carefully constructed web of secrecy, peppered with some hints of vulnerability and accessibility - he was famous for answering customer emails - only added to the looming legend that grew

with each Apple innovation.

"The more you saw him as having mystique, the more it went hand in hand as him being a visionary," says Maia Anderson, an associate professor at the UCLA Anderson School of Management.

When mysterious people are successful, she says, we perceive them "as if they have a special something endowed to them that most of us don't have access to."

She conducted a study in which subjects were asked to assess Jobs's potential at predicting government spending, trends in the stock market, and the future of interest rates.

"The more people saw him as having mystique, the more they ascribed to him the ability to predict those things," she said. "It's a testament to how much people saw in him."

It's also a testament to how closely he guarded his personal image.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY From the beginning, there has been a cult around Apple, says Kahney. But that had less to do with personality and had more to do with the products,

which engendered tremendous loyalty. That so few people used them created both an air of exclusivity and a fierce protectiveness from enthusiasts constantly worried that behemoths like Microsoft would run their beloved company out of business.

Jobs added something different to the mix.

"One of the things that Jobs did, which was very unlike anyone else, was he did it his way," says Jonathan Gabay, a branding consultant and founder of JonathanGabay.com.

Before Jobs, computers were grey boxes used for maths and science; business machines for men in suits and ties. Jobs, clad in jeans and pioneering the casual-Friday dotcom lifestyle, changed all that.

"It liberated people to express a different way of doing things, hence his brilliant slogan 'think different'," says Gabay.

MAINSTREAM BLUES

By thinking differently, Jobs placed himself squarely in the mainstream. With the invention of the iPod and iPhone, Apple went from a

quirky underdog to a global powerhouse. Its ubiquitous white earbuds were worn by both hipster artists and Wall Street suits.

When it came to business, Jobs was anything but a revolutionary. "It seems like a cool, liberal, creative company, but the reality is it's a very locked-down place. It's not a happy place to work," says Kahney.

"It's one of the tightest-controlled corporations in the world."

The mystery surrounding Jobs was always just a few notes away from menace. As the company became more successful and less outwardly innovative - after all, how many times can one company be expected to create the next big thing that revolutionises our lives? - the chance that Jobs might prove himself to be fallible increased.

SELLING A SOLUTION

Now the company that Jobs pioneered must navigate a new path without its storied leader. But the legacy that Jobs left provides some direction.

As consumers around the world went online to memorialise Jobs, no-one was crow-

ing about his innovations in processor speed or even Apple's innovative design.

The majority of posts cemented Jobs's status as a dreamer and visionary: quoting him when he said: "Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition," linking to Apple adverts that begin 'Here's to the crazy ones'; posting articles that promise to explain 'What Steve Jobs understands that our politicians don't'.

Jobs died at a time when people trust authority less than ever. The technology he created and the image he projected sold consumers a possible solution.

"People are desperately craving the idea that they can do things in a different way because they don't trust the way it was done before," says Gabay. "This sense of non-conforming was exactly what Steve Jobs is about. It's incredibly attractive, especially today."

Above all, Jobs promised a lifestyle - you can be cool, you can go against the grain, and you can succeed with those ideas.