**The Wars Continue and the Militarization of our Police Hurts Everyone**

Just a few weeks ago, President Obama signed a secret order to authorize continuation of the Afghan war for at least another year. The order authorizes U.S. airstrikes to support Afghan military operations in the country and authorizes U.S. ground troops to continue normal operations, which is to say, to occasionally accompany Afghan troops on operations. The secret order was leaked to the New York Times.

The administration affirmed that there had been “heated debate” between Pentagon advisers and others in Obama’s cabinet chiefly concerned not to lose soldiers in combat. The most notable absence was any concern for Afghan civilians affected by air strikes and ground troop operations. Also, the lack of the democratic process is obvious.

* The wars are not working. According to the Global Terrorism Database, the number of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and across the world has increased (not decreased) since the war began in 2001.
* Only 2% of the drone killings have been confirmed ‘suspected terrorists’
* The wars are a waste of the U.S. taxpayers’ money. The Pentagon has requested another $58.3 billion for the war in Afghanistan in the year fiscal year 2015.
* 4,000,000,000 dollars in the “war against terror”
* The wars are taking toll on the U.S. military. Those who return from war are hurting. 22 U.S. veterans commit suicide every day. One veteran who committed suicide said, “Most of us are poor farmers killing poor farmers while people in our nations starve.” – Jacob George, U.S. veteran
* After the 2009 U.S. military surge, the number of civilian casualties, mainly children, has increased.
* The poverty that already existed in Afghanistan has worsened. More than 4000 Afghans have set themselves on fire in 2014. 4000 have tried to poison themselves.
* Afghanistan suffers with the problems of obtaining the basic human needs of food and water
	+ Chronic malnutrition
	+ Unemployment is officially at 36%; Afghan labor organizations put it as high as 80%
	+ Amnesty International reports that the war is displacing 400 people every day
	+ Refugee camps are squalid, facing a very cold winter
* The war also results in militarization of our local police. The Champaign County Sherriff’s office was given an MRAP – a Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle. It weighs 35,000 pounds, is 10 feet high, and 21 feet long.

Attempts to remake Afghanistan by military force have resulted in warlord-ism, ever more widespread, desperate poverty, and bereavement for hundreds of thousands whose loved ones are among the casualties. Area hospitals report seeing fewer IED injuries and many more bullet wounds from battles between rival armed militias whose allegiances are hard to determine. With 40% of U.S. weapon supplied to Afghan security forces now un-accounted for, the weapons used by all sides may very well be supplied by the United States.