



A DIPLOMATIC CASUALTY OF WAR

Matthew Hoh's warning to Obama goes unheeded in Afghanistan

BY ROGER MORRIS AND GEORGE KENNEY

THE RARE RESIGNATION ON principle is always telling in American government. When Matthew Hoh left the State Department in October—a Marine Captain in Iraq who became a diplomat in Afghanistan early this year—his act was significant far beyond the first reports.

Hoh speaks grim truth to power. His message is that to pursue the Afghan war policy in any guise—including President Obama's prescription of 30,000 additional, rapidly deployed troops—will be utter folly, trapping America in an unwinnable civil war in the Hindu Kush, and only fueling terrorism.

An advisor in southern Afghanistan, Hoh knew the malignancy of war behind the war. Eight years after the U.S. inva-

sion and a third of a trillion dollars spent, half the nation faces starvation on 45 cents a day, half the children die before five, and half the surviving young have no schools, part of a torment Afghans plead in poll after poll to be understood as the core of their conflict. He knew well the source of that scourge in the U.S.-installed Kabul regime, a kleptocracy of war- and drug-lords holed up amid American bodyguards in "poppy palaces," while clan-based "security forces" loot the countryside, sodomize its sons and swell insurgent ranks.

"We're propping up a government," Hoh said last week, "that isn't worth dying for." So pervasive and profound is that corruption, so entwined with the private exploitation and official graft of the U.S. occupation regime—including kickbacks or extortion payments from both the American military and civilian

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