
WILL THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN FINALLY PAY OFF?

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In my previous blog of Dec. 12, 2016, I reviewed the causes and history of our war in Afghanistan which started in 2002 and of this date, cost the U.S. taxpayer 1.077 trillion dollars. All this money was spent to force the Taliban government, and later the Taliban rebels, to allow us to build a pipeline from the Dauletabad natural gas field in Turkmenistan through Afghanistan, and Pakistan, to India to cover the huge demand for energy in those countries.

Despite the ups-and-downs of the still-active war and the changes in the Afghan government, our oil companies never gave up their dreams to have the so-called TAPI pipeline completed.

Finally, it seems, this dream came true. After long discussions with the governments of the involved countries concerning primarily "transfer costs" (meaning monies being paid to allow gas to pass through one country to the end user in this case India). One may remember that the quarrel about transfer fees started the war between Russia and Chechnya in 1999.

In February of 2018 all problems seemed to be resolved and the project to lay a 1,000 mile long 1.6 m (56 inches) diameter gas pipeline, having a capacity of up to 3.2 billion cubic feet per day, got the green light from all involved parties with the strong support of the U.S. government. Under the agreement, Pakistan is entitled to receive 25 percent of all gas passing through the pipeline.

The section from the Turkmenistan gas field to the Afghan border was started on Dec. 13, 2015 and is now completed. On Feb. 23, 2018, construction started on the Afghan side by the TAPI Pipeline Company and with participation of the Asian Development Bank. It seems some accommodations with the Afghan rebels, or the local district chiefs, were made to let the pipeline through, which will be passing along the highway between Herat (close to the Iranian border) and Qandahar on to Quetta in Pakistan and then on to India.

While the bulk of the pipeline will be buried underground and is therefore safe from sabotage, there have to be compressor stations along the line in order to keep the gas flowing. These could be vulnerable to attack. This may be the reason that President Trump is sending additional troops to Afghanistan. They may be needed to guard the construction crews. To add to the potential hazards, pipe line crews may also encounter buried land mines.

Despite all this, lets wish the company consortium which invested much money, and 16 years of waiting, good luck in their undertaking, which is scheduled to be completed in 2020.

Kaynak/Source: