

AFGHAN RICHES: Oh the irony!

Written by Editorial Staff
Friday, 18 June 2010 13:05

The Pentagon announced on Monday that Afghanistan is sitting on top of an estimated \$1 trillion worth of mineral deposits. If true, we have a new poster child for the term "irony."

All these years, with countless invaders, wars, suffering and death - a civilization that is closer to the Stone Age than the 21st Century — and suddenly Afghanistan has riches most countries can't imagine.

Senior U.S. officials told The New York Times that there is iron, copper, cobalt, gold and lithium buried beneath the rugged Afghan terrain. And, according to a St. Louis Post-Dispatch report, an internal Pentagon memo says Afghanistan could become "the Saudi Arabia of lithium," which is a key component of batteries.

If this is true, then mining easily becomes the key base of the Afghan economy, supplanting opium — and can fund such things as roads, water projects, schools and hospitals.

But not everybody is buying it — or at least the prosperity of it all.

According to the Los Angeles Times, Luke Popovich of the National Mining Association was quoted as saying, "Sudan will host the Winter Olympics before these guys get a trillion dollars out of the ground."

According to most reports, plenty of experts can buy the fact that Afghanistan is sitting on a plethora of riches. But most say there isn't any feasible way to get those riches out of the ground and across the mountainous terrain at a reasonable cost. Then comes having to deal with competing forces, such as the Taliban. It makes any mining operation extremely unlikely.

So why the declaration of riches by the Pentagon?

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It could be that the war in Afghanistan isn't going well right now for U.S. forces, and U.S. officials are looking for any distractions available to keep positive news in the forefront. In other words, it could be nothing more than a public relations move.

But it sure makes for a good story.