

END
ENDLESS
WARS

AFGHANISTAN

OUR VIEW

After nearly nineteen years in Afghanistan, it is time for America's longest war to come to an end. Our troops have served valiantly, and it dishonors their service to continue a fruitless nation-building exercise that does not make America safer or more prosperous.

Our endless wars carry a high price—in lives lost and resources spent. In total, roughly 2,400 soldiers have been killed in action since the war began. Tens of thousands more have been wounded. Many troops have endured double-digit deployments. Annually, \$45 billion in taxpayer dollars goes to support the Afghan war, and total direct war costs over the last eighteen years now exceed \$1 trillion. These costs exclude the future obligations in care and benefits we owe to wounded veterans and their families.

Fortunately, America is now realistically considering withdrawal options. Following the February 29th agreement, the U.S. has finished drawing down troop levels to 8,600 personnel from the 14,000 previously deployed.¹ Proposals for a further reduction to 4,500 by the fall of 2020 should be encouraged and implemented. Nevertheless, this welcome news is no substitute for full withdrawal.

We were justified in invading Afghanistan after 9/11 and long ago we met our core objectives. Core Al Qaeda has been largely destroyed and Osama Bin Laden is dead. The few remaining Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan “are primarily focused on their own survival” according to the Department of Defense.

MYTH VS. FACT

Myth: *Once the U.S. leaves Afghanistan it will become a terrorist haven.*

Fact: The United States is not the only country with an interest in preventing Afghanistan from becoming a terrorist sanctuary. Regional neighbors like China, India, Iran, and Russia have a vested interest in the security of the area. After American involvement ends, there is no guarantee of internal political stability in the country, but the future of Afghanistan is the responsibility of the Afghan people. Staying longer will not achieve the goals that have eluded policymakers for decades and will only continue to make our troops easier targets for our adversaries. Should they ever prove necessary, United States has the capabilities it needs to launch over-the-horizon counter-terrorism airstrikes or raids without a permanent presence in Afghanistan.

Myth: *Military veterans and families support a continued military presence in Afghanistan.*

Fact: According to polling conducted by Concerned Veterans for America in April 2020, 73 percent of veterans and 69 percent of military families support withdrawing from Afghanistan.² A previous YouGov poll in January 2020, poll found that nearly 70 percent of Americans supported bringing our troops home from Afghanistan. Decisive majorities of veterans agree on withdrawal.³

PRINCIPLED SOLUTIONS

As the U.S. continues negotiations to reach agreement on a drawdown or peace deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan, Concerned Veterans for America urges lawmakers to encourage the following conditions:

- A defined exit date for full withdrawal of U.S. troops to avoid indefinite long-term obligations.
- Bring home all U.S. soldiers as expeditiously as possible.
- Reject Congressional attempts to legislate additional conditions of withdrawal in order to force the President to continue a war opposed by the vast majority of the American public.
- Secure assurances from the Taliban that they will not support or harbor groups that pose a threat to the American homeland, backed by the credible threat of our over-the-horizon counterterrorism capabilities.

¹ <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Agreement-For-Bringing-Peace-to-Afghanistan-02.29.20.pdf>

² <https://cv4a.org/news-media/poll-veterans-and-military-families-favor-more-health-care-choice-for-veterans-increasingly-support-ending-endless-wars/>

³ https://structurecms-production-psyclone.netdna-ssl.com/client_assets/bringourtroopshome/media/themes/pdf/YouGov-poll-Jan-2020-PDF.pdf?1582293118

