

CONCERNED VETERANS FOR AMERICA ENDING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN



OUR VIEW

After eighteen years in Afghanistan, it is time for America's longest war to come to an end. Our service members have served valiantly, and it dishonors their sacrifice 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 go 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.

Now, after months of negotiations between the United States and the Taliban, an initial peace agreement is on the horizon. Reports suggest the deal includes a partial withdrawal of 6,000 troops—less than half of the roughly 14,000 military personnel currently based in Afghanistan. This is welcome news but not a substitute for full withdrawal.

We were justified in invading Afghanistan after 9/11 and long ago we met our core objectives. 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 the country is the responsibility of the Afghan people. Staying longer will not achieve the goals that have continued to elude policymakers.

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

Fact: According to polling conducted by Concerned Veterans for America in April 2019, 60 percent of veterans and military families would support President Trump's efforts to end American involvement in Afghanistan. The Pew Research Center released a poll in July 2019 that showed most veterans believe the wars in

Afghanistan and Iraq were not worth fighting when considering what we know now.

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 within eighteen months.
- Secure assurances from the Taliban that they will not support or harbor groups that pose a threat to America.

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