

World Socialist Web Site

Majority of US veterans back full withdrawal from Afghanistan, other overseas conflicts

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April 30, 2020

A new poll reveals that more than half of US military veterans surveyed believe that the US government should be less engaged in foreign wars, an increase of about nine percent compared to the same poll conducted last year. A large majority of military veterans and the families of troops and veterans also support a full withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Seventy-three percent of veterans and 69 percent of military families support a full withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, while 57 percent of veterans polled expressed opposition to continued “military conflicts overseas,” the *Military Times* reported.

More than half of veterans backing full withdrawal “offered strong support for the idea,” the *Military Times* also reported, while only “7 percent said they think the country should be more involved.”

The results of this year’s poll, conducted by Concerned Veterans for America, shows an increase in antiwar sentiments compared to the 2019 survey, which showed 60 percent of veterans and families wanted a complete withdrawal.

About two-thirds of veterans also said they want to see a reduction in US spending on foreign aid, and about 17 percent said they wanted to see an overall decrease in US military funding (34 percent said they wanted an increase).

National security ranked only fourth among survey participants’ top political priorities, well behind the first choice, health care.

Immigration and the US national debt ranked second and third. There was a margin of error of 3.5 percent, the *Military Times* noted.

The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, marked the beginning of a nearly 19-year-long war, the longest in US history, as well as the onset of a so-called “global war on terrorism” that was used to justify the war of aggression against Iraq, as well as bombings, assassinations, renditions and torture in other parts of the globe. This was followed by the war on Libya and the bloody proxy war for regime change in Syria, both of which relied upon elements linked to Al Qaeda, the supposed target of the US war on terrorism.

Under both the Republican administrations of Bush and Trump, as well the Democratic one of Obama, the pretext of combating terrorism has been utilized to justify global militarism aimed at shoring up declining US hegemony.

Late last year, *The Washington Post* published “The Afghanistan Papers,” revealing the same pessimism in the military’s leadership now reflected in the military’s rank-and-file veterans and their families.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in December:

“What emerges from the interviews, conducted with more than 400 US military officers, special forces operatives, officials from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and senior advisers to both US commanders in Afghanistan and the White House, is an overriding sense of failure tinged with bitterness and cynicism. Those who participated had no expectation that their words would be made public.”

The death, suffering and criminal waste of vast resources in Afghanistan boggles the mind. Of the 3,500 dead in coalition forces, the majority, 2,300, were American, the Watson Institute at Brown University reported as part of its “Cost of War” project.

The institute also reported 157,000 Afghan deaths resulting from the war, likely a significant underestimation.

Brown University also summed up the “costs” of wars and military action in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan at \$5.9 trillion.

The price tag for all of the “Post-9/11 wars” was more than \$6.4 trillion, and, according to the “Cost of War’s” conservative estimate, 801,000 fatalities were directly caused by the wars and “several times as many indirectly.”

Moreover, 21 million people, including millions of young children, have become refugees or “displaced” persons.

To put that in perspective, it is as if Norway, Sweden and Denmark were depopulated, or almost one-half the population of Spain or Argentina. In the United States it would mean the depopulation of all three states of Tennessee, Indiana and Missouri or the entire state of New York or almost all of Florida.

It is important, however, not to be fooled by the “concern” of the group “Concerned Veterans for America.” It was created by billionaire businessman Charles G. Koch and cut from the same cloth as the Cato Institute, Heritage Foundation and Americans for Prosperity.

“(M)aintaining our presence in these countries puts American lives at risk, wastes valuable taxpayer dollars, and saps valuable human and material resources from confronting more immediate and persistent threats to American security and prosperity (emphasis added),” Concerned Veterans for America explained.

It continued: “American security interests can be protected by strengthening the long-term economic stability of our country, maintaining a strong military able to deter adversaries’ actions before they happen, committing ourselves to the deliberate employment of Americans abroad, and a vigorous defense of our nation if attacked or threatened.”

In creating a new veterans group, Koch is seeking to influence public opinion for the purpose of making the shift from wars on terrorism to “great power” conflicts with China and Russia, posing the threat of nuclear war. Just as ominously, “confronting ... threats to American security” means for Koch and his fellow billionaires, the growing militarization of the police and the use of troops to control the working class.