

Obama Must Show Leadership, Pull Out of Afghanistan

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by *Malou Innocent*

At a recent town hall [meeting](#), [via Ryan Jaronyk at [The Humble Libertarian](#)], U.S. Rep. Tim Johnson (R-IL) explained why he wants a withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan:

I'm suggesting to you that there is no end game. I believe that our men and women are there in a mission that is ill-defined... I think we're losing people by the day, here and over there, with no even indirect relationship to our national security.

Within a couple of weeks, I'm going to be looking at legislation and issuing a definitive statement on my position on Afghanistan, which at this point I would suggest would call for our withdrawal of troops forthwith.

We've had a succession from Vietnam to Iraq to Afghanistan, and the net result has been thousands of lives lost, and very little progress made... I'm in favor of doing everything we can to make America secure, to make sure we don't have another 9/11 or even anything analogous to that, but I'm also convinced that our continued presence in Afghanistan is not serving that role. And we need to seriously re-examine where we're at.

As I [mentioned](#) back in February of this year, "There is immense pressure to infuse greater troops in the region, but there is no objective in mind — and before you deploy the troops, you want to have a strategy." The Obama administration is still stuck at a crossroads: either send more troops to protect the

villages of Afghanistan from the Taliban, or stay at present levels (or decrease U.S. troop commitments) to go after al Qaeda cells in Pakistan.

The American public is against sending more troops, the overwhelming majority of Democrats are against sending more troops, some Republicans in Congress have begun to speak out against sending more troops, and prominent conservative commentators are against sending more troops. I am reminded of a quote from General Fred Weyand, the last U.S. commander in Vietnam, who told Pulitzer prize-winning author and Vietnam correspondent Stanley Karnow, "The American army is really a people's army in the sense that it belongs to the American people... When the army is committed, the American people are committed; when the American people lose their commitment, it is futile to try to keep the army committed."

I used to ridicule President Bush for staying the course in Iraq. While President Obama will take a hit to his credibility for deciding to scale down America's presence — after having already deployed more troops earlier this year — I would commend the President for having the strength of his convictions for deciding not to send more young men and women to fight and die for a cause (and a country) that does not constitute a vital national security interest. Doubling down in Afghanistan is too easy. It's deciding to pull ourselves out of Afghanistan that will take true leadership.

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