

Afghanistan requires fewer, not more, American soldiers.

Posted by ZbigniewMazurak On October - 9 - 2009



I am aware of the fact that the Afghan war is going on very badly. Alas, two camps have proposed bad radical proposals for how to fix Afghanistan. Some liberals have proposed a quick withdrawal of all American troops from that country. Neocons and nation-builders have proposed a „troop number surge“.

Unfortunately, many generals, columnists and politicians (most of them totally ignorant of the issue) have endorsed the „Afghan surge“ strategy proposed by Gen. McChrystal, the commander of American troops stationed in Afghanistan. McChrystal called for 40,000 additional soldiers, and tons of extra money and supplies; Gen. Petraeus and David Limbaugh endorsed his request and didn't even think about it. John McCain said he wants the number of Marines in Afghanistan to be doubled. Mitch McConnell said that

Republican Senators will happily vote for any surge proposal if Presidents Obama sends one to the Congress. Even Pat Buchanan, a former isolationist who previously opposed wars of country-building, claimed that a „surge“ is necessary to win the Afghan war.

All of them are flat wrong, based on facts. Afghanistan requires fewer, not more, American soldiers.

The generals who favor a „surge“ are like the Soviet generals of the 1980s – they believe that the problem is an inadequate number of soldiers and that the solution is simple. During its Afghan intervention, the USSR had 120,000 soldiers (some sources say 150,000 soldiers) in Afghanistan, yet it failed to win the war. McChrystal's plan would increase the number of Western soldiers in Afghanistan to 140,000. He seems to believe that he can achieve what the Russians failed to achieve if he just beats their number of troopers. In 1969, America had 540,000 soldiers in Vietnam, yet it couldn't win the Vietnamese war. Here's an uncomfortable fact: the „surge“ is a recipe for failure. Increasing the number of soldiers will only burden the DOD with huge fiscal costs and increase American casualties. It will not help America win the war.

President Bush originally favored a small, 30,000-man contingent for Afghanistan, backed by the USAF, exactly because he didn't want America to become mired in the same bog in which the USSR was trapped! Most of those 30,000 soldiers were commandos and trainers for the ANA. That strategy allowed the US to win the initial stage of the war, and had it continued, America wouldn't have faced the debate it's facing now.

Some people claim that the Iraqi surge worked, so an Afghan surge will work, too. But the Iraqi „surge“ failed. Violence levels are steadily rising again, as are terrorist attack casualty numbers. Iraq is no longer a state at all – Iraqi Kurdistan is a de facto independent state with its own flag, army, currency, and government. Bob Gates tried to bring all Iraqi factions together – but failed. But even if the surge would've worked, it wouldn't have proven anything – what might work for Iraq will not work for Afghanistan. Comparing them is like comparing apples to oranges.

Gen. Petraeus and others wrongly claimed that aircraft attacks against terrorists can succeed only if there's a large combat-trooper contingent on the ground, because supposedly, only such a detachment can give the USAF adequate information about the targets. But they're wrong: intelligence information gathering is a secondary task for combat troops and they're not needed for that purpose anyway. This mission can be adequately performed by professional intelligence agents (civilian or military) and surveillance aircraft (e.g. drones), which can adequately monitor terrorist camps and bases from the air. (UAVs can even scan roads for IEDs, and they transmit 16,000 of video each month.) Critics claimed that this strategy was tried during the 1990s, but it wasn't: President Clinton never seriously attacked any targets in Afghanistan. Fighting terrorists with aircraft is also easy (it is aircraft, not ground troops, that conducted all the decisive operations of the initial phase of the war). As two CATO Institute analysts rightly wrote, „denying a sanctuary to terrorists who seek to attack the United States does not require complete pacification of Afghanistan, much less a long-term, large-scale military presence in the region.“

An obstacle for intel agents created by the nation-builders – the same people who argue for a „surge“ – is the war on drugs, which alienates Afghan farmers and causes them not to tell American soldiers anything.

Others claimed that any drawdown of the American contingent – as well as withdrawal – would amount to abandoning America's „Afghan and Pakistani friends“ to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Yet there's no evidence that the Taliban would again host AQ, considering the lesson they've learned, and even if the Taliban or AQ conquered a part of Afghan territory, that would not be an existential threat to the US. Personally, I wish AQ was trapped in a landlocked, worthless country like Afghanistan, where it can prepare no terrorist attacks, rather than a country like Germany, where the Hamburg group prepared the 9/11/2001 attacks. Which faction governs Afghanistan is none of America's concern. Also, the current Afghan government (which did not bother to legalize female circumcision nor burkas) is even more oppressive, more cruel and more corrupt than the Taliban regime. But whoever will govern Afghanistan, it will be a state based on Sharia law. It will never be a blooming democracy (in any sense), as country-builders such as McCain, Linda Chavez, Barack Obama, American generals and George Bush believe.

Moreover, it's not certain that the Taliban would reconquer the country even if American troops withdrew – the ANA is already somewhat large (though not large enough) and knows its native

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country better than the Americans. Most importantly, we conservatives are NOT arguing for withdrawal, but rather for a smaller contingent and a radical change of strategy. This policy will WIN the Afghan war.

Also, a large American contingent in Afghanistan is a motivation for insurgents, who believe it to be an occupying army. Surging the number of soldiers is like pouring gasoline into fire. SECDEF Gates was concerned about this, although eventually he was forced to endorse the McChrystal proposal.

Another false claim is that Afghanistan would be destabilized if American troops were scaled down or withdrawn. Actually, Afghanistan has always been unstable and suffering from civil wars and tribal conflicts. NATO troops stationed in Afghanistan are perceived as occupation troops and hated by most Afghans and Pakistanis, thus destabilizing, rather than helping, Afghanistan and Pakistan. A light footprint would deprive insurgent organizations and AQ of recruits, and that's what matters for both countries.

As a last point, any neocons also claim that the Afghan nation-building mission is worth waging because America must be compassionate and build a modern, prosperous Afghan state. Not only is such a task impossible to accomplish, it is also expensive and dangerous – it would drain the treasury, wreck the military, and mire America in a worthless country for humanitarian reasons. American soldiers are not armed crusaders obliged to right every wrong of this world. The role of the US military is only to defend the United States. You can't defend the Republic by conducting a nation-building mission that is not connected to America's defense. And if Republicans want to prove that they're credible on defense issues (there are many reasons to believe they're military weaklings no better than the Democrats), they should start working to stall and prevent Obama's defense cuts and his disastrous disarmament policies, rather than arguing for a ridiculous „surge" strategy that will weaken the US military.

It's time for a drawdown of the American contingent.

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Guest Columnist

2 Responses

1. [Dr. Lou Jellyfinger Said,](#)



From what I understand about Afghanistan. The u.s. has taken their eye off the ball. Forgetting the reason that we were sent there to do. Get AQ. With the billions we have already given to Pakistan why can't we go get these guys? Now the focus is to send in the dea to control the drug trade. The Afghan's would be better off with taliban back in power. They got results when it came to controlling the drug growing farmers. All we have accomplished so far is to kick the taliban out of power (or have we) and put our guy in there. If that is all we can say after 8 years of occupation then yes we need to bail out. Let the afghans figure it out on their own. They will and they will do it in less time. Either get r done or get out. Preferably both. But another 40,000 of our boot's on the ground is not going to accomplish a g.d. thing.

Posted on October 10th, 2009 at 9:35 am

2. [malcolm kyle Said,](#)



Afghanistan is just another hopeless spin-off from the War on Drugs. It's the black market economy that funds most of the terrorist groups in the world today. Including the Taliban and alQaida, so while opium remains in the shadow economy there will be absolutely no hope of a stable Afghanistan.

Obama's even refuses to stop imprisoning hundreds of thousands of non-violent people for smoking the "wrong" plants, so both he and his Drug Czar Gil Kerlikowske have become shills for the Taliban and alQaida.

The Nobel prize?????? He should be tried for treason!
What a useless fake the guy is!

Posted on October 10th, 2009 at 2:13 pm

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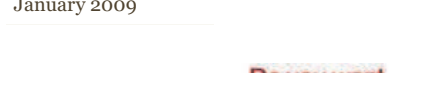
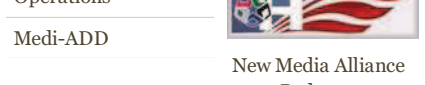
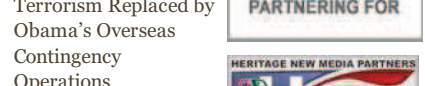
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