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Analysts Propose Different Ways To Handle Withdrawal From Afghanistan

Posted by [Staff](#) on September 14, 2009 | [ShareThis](#)

By Meagan Wiseley – University of New Mexico, Talk Radio News Service.

A group of experts in a panel discussion at the Cato Institute all agree that the current strategy, or lack thereof, is not succeeding in Afghanistan. However, these experts do not agree on what is to be done now.

Malou Innocent, Foreign Policy Analyst at the Cato Institute described continuing the mission in Afghanistan as both "unnecessary and unsustainable."

"The policy requires more troops than we can ever send. Add to that the burden of the spiraling financial crisis and the time and resources required. [It] will not be accomplished within costs acceptable to the American public", said Innocent.

Ted Galen Carpenter, Vice President of Defense and Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, says all U.S. forces should be withdrawn and escalation should not be the course of action.

"We have to treat the threat posed by al-Qaida as a chronic security problem [that] not only has to be managed but can be managed," said Carpenter.

There were conflicting opinions on withdrawal, as proved by Dr. Patrick Cronin, Director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies at National Defense University, who said U.S. forces should establish a stable Afghanistan state before attempting withdrawal. Cronin believes the Obama administration should be given one year to begin to make progress before planning an exit strategy.

Celeste Ward, Senior Defense Analyst for RAND, says that Iraq has had too much influence over the current debate.

"Perceptions about what happened in Iraq play too great a role in the collective thinking about Afghanistan," Ward said, adding that there is no end to an approach that includes occupation and rebuilding in Afghanistan.

September 14, 2009

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