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Obama promises to "finish the job" on Afghan war

By: [Julie Mason](#)**Examiner White House Correspondent****November 25, 2009**

With a decision on a war strategy resolved, President Obama declared his intent to "finish the job" in Afghanistan -- setting an ambitious new marker to end the long-running conflict.

The president, however, said he will delay outlining to the nation his long-awaited plans until after Thanksgiving.

"After eight years -- some of those years in which we did not have, I think, either the resources or the strategy to get the job done -- it is my intention to finish the job," Obama said. "And I feel very confident that when the American people hear a clear rationale for what we're doing there and how we intend to achieve our goals, that they will be supportive."

The president's conclusion on a war strategy coincided with a state visit from Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, a strategic ally whose government has a central -- and at times awkward -- influence on Afghanistan-related policymaking.

India is a major player in Afghanistan, funneling more than \$1 billion a year in financial aid to the struggling democracy. India also has a hostile relationship with Pakistan, which shares a border and cultural and religious ties with Afghanistan.

U.S. aid to Pakistan has long been a sticking point with India, which sees a continued threat from Pakistan, and particularly that nation's troops at its border. Both the United States and India also share a persistent alarm over Pakistan's harboring of resident Taliban and al Qaeda.

For its part, Pakistan accepts U.S. aid but keeps a jealous eye on India's relationship with the United States. Also of concern to U.S. policymakers is a recent spike in anti-Americanism in Pakistan.

"Pakistan is still assisting militants and turning a blind eye to the ones who are destabilizing Afghanistan," said Malou Innocent, a foreign policy expert at the Cato Institute.

Obama has frequently linked the future of Afghanistan to Pakistan, saying that securing the former depends on stabilizing the latter -- including rooting out terrorist safe havens, bolstering Pakistan's economy and pushing democratic reforms.

Singh, a soft-spoken vegetarian who secured a promise from Obama to visit India next year, said on the subject of Pakistan only that he was "very satisfied" with what Obama told him privately.

"The forces of terrorism in our region pose a grave threat to the entire civilized world and have to be defeated," the prime minister said. "President Obama and I have decided to strengthen our cooperation in the area of counterterrorism."


Obama on Monday evening held his ninth and apparently final meeting with his war council to discuss the future strategy for Afghanistan. Pentagon officials are seeking a significant troop increase to mount a counterinsurgency program.

His delay in announcing the new plan appears likely to prolong the drip-drip of leaks on the matter that the president has deplored. When a reporter suggested Obama could end the leaking with a speedy announcement, the president scoffed, "Why stop now?"

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