

# WIN ★ WITHOUT ★ WAR

## End Endless War in Afghanistan | August 2017

### Overview

On August 21, President Trump announced that the United States will send additional troops to Afghanistan, though he made a point of keeping Americans in the dark about almost all details of his plan, including troop levels or their exact mission or how he will bring an end to America's longest war and Afghanistan's protracted civil conflict.

There is simply no reason to believe that a few thousand more American troops will somehow accomplish what has eluded us for 16 years in Afghanistan. The truth remains that there is no military solution to the challenges in Afghanistan. By continuing down the same failed 'military-first' policy that his two predecessors pursued, Donald Trump is risking more American and Afghan lives, wasting more taxpayer dollars, and making a sustainable and lasting peace even harder to achieve.

In truth, the war in Afghanistan goes back decades, long before American and NATO soldiers arrived. A lasting solution to nearly four decades of conflict will take a robust peace process led by the Afghan people, including their neighbors, and supported by robust American diplomacy. What has already proven to be ineffective is more American troops and bombs.

### Questions for Congress

- **TRANSPARENCY:** President Trump announced a plan for Afghanistan that had virtually no details. This excessive secrecy sets a dangerous precedent and threatens the values we hold dear in a democracy. Americans have a right to know about its country's plans for war. What will you do to ensure transparency for Trump's Afghanistan strategy?
- **WAR AUTHORIZATION/ENDING THE WAR:** The broad powers provided in the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) has become a blank check for endless war in Afghanistan, which is underscored by Trump's ability to send more troops essentially without Congress weighing in. I believe that Congress must reassert its voice on sending our young men and women into harm's way.
  - What will you do to demand that Congress debate repealing the 2001 AUMF?
  - Similarly, what will you do to ensure that part of the US strategy in Afghanistan includes a plan for ending our military involvement there?
- **HUMAN RIGHTS:** Trump's speech stressed the loosening of the military's rules of engagement in Afghanistan, which has already led to more civilian casualties. In your Congressional oversight role, what will you do to ensure that our military isn't violating human rights and is following the laws of war?

### Additional Background

**There is no military solution in Afghanistan.**

- By perpetuating the war, President Trump ignores the simple truth that there is no military solution to the challenges that remain in Afghanistan.
- There is nothing that an additional several thousand troops can do now that as many as 100,000 could not do in the past sixteen years to provide lasting peace in Afghanistan.
- Even Secretary of Defense James Mattis -- once a commander in Afghanistan -- has acknowledged that the U.S. is “not winning” the war against the Taliban. A few thousand more American troops will simply not change the underlying realities preventing peace.

### **Diplomacy and negotiations are the only way to put an end to the conflict.**

- Diplomacy and negotiations are the only way to put an end to the conflict and create the conditions for a lasting peace.
- After sixteen years of war, it’s time to abandon the military-first approach. Diplomacy and development must be prioritized to solve the myriad of challenges Afghanistan faces today, such as protracted tribal and political rivalries, rampant corruption, poverty, and regional feuding.
- Sending even more American troops to Afghanistan could be an obstacle for genuine progress and sustainable peace. Corruption, for example, [is a significantly worse problem](#) since the US military operation in Afghanistan began in 2001. In fact, the special inspector-general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR), John Sopko, called corruption an “existential threat” in 2016.
- America’s role in Afghanistan should be to stand with its people in pursuit of a lasting, sustainable peace - in particular, one that protects the important gains women and girls have made since 2001 - and help support robust humanitarian aid and transitional efforts to help heal the wounds of the war.

### **America’s endless war in Afghanistan comes with high costs of immense human suffering and trillions in taxpayer dollars.**

- **The Human Costs:** Since 2001, more than 104,000 lives have been lost in the war in Afghanistan, including more than 2,400 American military personnel and over 31,000 Afghan civilians. In addition, more than 20,000 U.S. service members have been wounded, with tens of thousands more suffering from invisible wounds from war such as post-traumatic stress disorder. An additional 41,000 civilians have been injured [since 2001](#). The war has created the second largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) behind Syria. While hundreds of thousands are returning, they are doing so often involuntarily. Returning refugees and IDPs [face](#) limited ability to access basic health care and other services, putting them at risk of malnutrition, illness and early mortality.
- **The Financial Costs:** [Every hour](#), taxpayers in the United States are paying \$4 million for cost of war in Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan has cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$780 billion dollars already. Care for veterans and interest payments will add trillions more over the next several decades.

### **Congress must reassert its war-making authority.**

- Before Donald Trump sends thousands of more American troops to Afghanistan, Congress should repeal the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) that authorized the war in Afghanistan, and debate and vote on whether or not to authorize ongoing military operations in Afghanistan.
- Congress should oppose a blank check for endless war.