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Why More Troops in Afghanistan?

Why are we in Afghanistan in the first place?

To keep the Taliban from taking over the country and providing a sanctuary for the terrorist Al Qaeda organization. To contain the threat of Islamic Fascism.

Why not just keep Al Qaeda out of the U.S.?

Since the beginning of the 20th century, our strategy for defense of the nation has always been focused on a “forward presence” - defending “over there” instead of “here”. It has worked.

How long do we have to be “over there”?

As long as it takes. Our troops were in Germany and Japan for over four decades to ensure the stability of those regions to serve our national interests. It’s not quite the same as an area where there is an insurgency, but the strategy of “forward defense” holds true.

How do we “win” in Afghanistan?

“Win” has a different definition against insurgents than against conventional forces. “Win” means establishing a stable state where the insurgents have no home, no credibility. That is a long military and political process. We win as long as we contain the threat. There is no nicely definable, quick victory. Get used to it.

How can we “win” when the bad guys have a sanctuary in Pakistan?

Under those circumstances, the best we can do is “hold our own” until the sanctuary in Pakistan can be denied. Such denial is a drawn out process backed by the strong political resolve and military strength.

Our strategy must include a way to bring Pakistan to our side, conduct operations with us to eliminate the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Pakistan, and bring the Northwest Territories truly under the control of the Pakistani Government. As long as the Taliban and Al Qaeda have a sanctuary in Pakistan, the best we can do is “contain” – but we must do that or be defeated and invite more homeland terrorism.

What is the best strategy in Afghanistan?

The goal is to protect the people against the insurgents so that they feel secure, will not hide and protect the insurgents, and will support a nation building process toward a stable government that gains its “reason for being” from the people (not from a cult or religion, not a feudal theocracy).

How many troops are really required?

It's not just a general's "instinct". There is historical data that shows what is needed to quell an insurgency. The number of troops required is based on the population of the nation (the people you seek to protect), not the number of insurgents (see "Force Requirements in Stability Operations by James T. Quinlivan, Army War College).

There are 28,000,000 people in Afghanistan (roughly). According to historical data, up to 20 troops per 1000 people (population) are necessary to quell an insurgency over an extended period. Using 5 troops per 100 people results in a troop requirement of 140,000.

There are 100,000 soldiers in the Afghan Army who are largely ineffective at this time without the presence of U.S. and Coalition Troops. There are 77,000 in the Afghan police force; also largely ineffective. It will take time to train them. For the time being, let's count them as 10% effective.

There are 66,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan at this time. There are 39,000 Coalition troops, however many of them are not allowed to participate in offensive operations (which means operations necessary to protect the people by rooting out the insurgents). So let's count 25% as being useful.

Crunch those numbers and you get about 93,000 troops against the requirement for 140,000 (about 67% of what is required).

Add 46,000 U.S. troops and you meet the requirement. That's where the military troop numbers come from (approximately). So, the request for 40,000 more troops is realistic – "in the ball park".

To do less is to invite a long, long war with no real prospect of a "win", mounting U.S. casualties and reinforced confidence given to a resolute enemy.

What about the Vice President's reported strategy to "keep troop levels where they are and use more Predator Drone strikes"?

This is a non-solution offered with purely political motives. It has no foundation in history or fact. It seeks only to offer a façade of action.

Let's face it – we're going to be in this type of war around the world for a long time – even while other potential enemies with real military and economic power are building to challenge us. It's tough to be number one – it's also better than any other number, contrary to Obama's apologies.

We need strong leadership to persevere... not the "waffles" we're hearing. Speak out. Let the free and the brave be heard!!
