

Obama halts drawdown of US troops in Afghanistan

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US President Barack Obama announced Wednesday a halt in the reduction of US troop strength in Afghanistan, leaving the US troop strength at current levels until he leaves office next January. The decision is in response to the increasing instability of the US puppet regime in Kabul, and to facilitate an escalation of US military operations by the next US president.

“The decision I am making today insures that my successor has a solid foundation for continued progress in Afghanistan, as well as the flexibility to address the threat of terrorism, as it evolves,” Obama said. “Instead of going down to 5,500 troops, the United States will maintain approximately 8,400 troops into next year, through the end of my administration.

After hailing “the heroic efforts of our military and intelligence agencies,” the US President warned that “the security situation remains precarious.”

The extended deployment of US troops, recommended to President Obama by US Commander in Afghanistan John Nicholson and the Pentagon leadership, will be “tailored to help Afghan forces continue to improve,” and will support “critical counterterrorism operations” in Kandahar, Jalalabad and elsewhere, Obama said.

He called on Washington’s NATO allies to use the upcoming Warsaw summit as a platform to “define their own commitments” in support of the US-led war. The timing of the announcement—two days before the NATO summit begins—strongly suggests that the extended US troop presence will be used as a lever to extract additional troop commitments for Afghanistan from powers like Germany, Italy, Britain and Canada.

“Afghan security forces are still not as strong as they need to be,” Obama said. Afghan forces have “pushed the Taliban out of some areas,” and “remain in control of most district centers,” but face “a continued Taliban

insurgency and terrorist networks.”

“I strongly believe that it is in our national security interest—especially after all the blood and treasure we’ve invested in Afghanistan over the years—that we give our Afghan partners the very best opportunity to succeed,” Obama said.

Absurdly, Obama claimed that the US is “no longer engaged in a major ground war in Afghanistan.” In reality, during the year and a half since the purported “end of the war in Afghanistan” in December 2014, the American military has continued to organize and lead military repression against the country’s rural areas and any forces deemed hostile to the US-backed state. US combat forces are involved in frequent clashes with Taliban militias and other insurgent forces, and the past year has seen the combat deaths of thousands of Afghan national forces. Pentagon planners envision an American presence of thousands for “decades to come,” US generals told media earlier this year.

“The narrative that we’re leaving Afghanistan is self-defeating,” Defense Secretary Ashton Carter told a US Army conference Wednesday. Carter warned that an “enduring commitment” by the United States is necessary to prevent Afghanistan’s “use as a safe haven for terrorists.”

This turns reality on its head. Beginning in the late 1970s, the American government worked systematically to finance, train and arm Islamist networks in Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan, fueling the growth of the very same terrorist and insurgent forces that Washington now claims to oppose, including the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Since 2001, 15 years of US invasion, occupation, counterinsurgency and mass terror, directed largely against Afghanistan’s rural and oppressed population, have failed to produce anything close to a stable

centralized state, and the position of the extremist and insurgent forces in Afghanistan appears stronger than ever. Islamist insurgencies and terror groups are waging an increasingly successful civil war against Kabul, one that threatens to produce an Iraq-style takeover of Afghanistan's major cities and infrastructure by insurgent militias.

The US-backed administration in Kabul, run by a coalition of imperialist stooges, drug traffickers and wealthy feudal landowning families installed by an American invasion force in 2002, has been repeatedly humiliated by opposition forces since the official "end" of the US combat role. Last September, Islamist insurgents captured the key northern city of Kunduz, and government forces regained control only with aid from US Special Forces, and the US air bombardment that infamously targeted and incinerated a well-known a Doctors Without Frontiers (MSF) hospital.

Last June, Taliban attackers penetrated the Kabul government's central compound, firing machine guns and setting off explosives just outside an ongoing session of the Afghan legislature. In April, Taliban fighters attacked the Afghan Special Forces' headquarters in Kabul, killing dozens and wounding over 300. The Islamist fundamentalist movement also remains in control of large areas of Afghanistan's hinterland and border areas with Pakistan, along with a smaller but growing Afghan Islamic State affiliate.

Fearful of inflaming popular anti-war sentiment just months before the elections, the Obama administration has sought to delay another official revision of the American troop presence as long as possible.

At the same time, the White House has green-lighted the Pentagon to lay the foundations for a more extensive US intervention in Afghanistan and Central Asia, once the elections are past and a new administration has taken office, approving expanded US air and ground operations in June.

In May, Obama authorized the assassination of Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour in Pakistan's Baluchistan province, signaling that the US government is prepared to expand the war against the Taliban into areas of Pakistan that were previously off-limits to the US drone war.

Wednesday's announcement comes as the latest confirmation that Washington intends to wage permanent war in Afghanistan. The US political

establishment is determined to retain its grip over the impoverished and war-ravaged country, which has considerable natural resources of its own, and can serve as a staging area for future military and covert operations throughout the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia, in Pakistan, and in western China.

Factions within the American ruling class are pushing for expanded US involvement along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and the strategic and highly unstable Pakistani Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

This week, US Senator John McCain staged a high-profile tour of Pakistani military sites in Miranshah, a fortress town in the FATA province of North Waziristan. McCain made overtures to pro-US factions within a Pakistani ruling elite that is increasingly being forced into an alliance with China, promising increased American involvement in "counter-terror" operations run by Islamabad. "We look forward to closer relations and resolving the differences we have," McCain said.



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