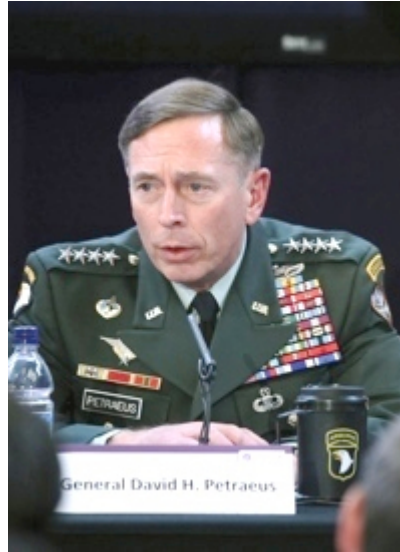




Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on November 12, 2010

NATO Spends \$50 Million for Each Dead Taliban

The headline atop the front page of my hometown newspaper announced on Friday, the day after Veterans Day, that federal funds for home-heating assistance have been cut in half. Not exactly heartwarming news in northern New England in mid-November. Meanwhile, half a world away, a story in the Kabul Press gives the calculation of how much it is costing NATO forces and their taxpayers back home to kill Taliban in Afghanistan. It comes to — brace yourselves, now — \$50 million per dead Taliban.



And the Taliban is killing NATO soldiers for a mere \$50,000 per corpse. Obviously, the enemy is killing far more efficiently — 1,000 times more efficiently.

Let us concede there is an economy of scale here. If they are counting only dead Taliban, the number is artificially high. If you count all the other people we are killing with our missiles fired by unmanned bombers, there is doubtless a more favorable ratio of kills per bullets, missiles, planes, soldiers, and other expenses. It is not nearly so costly when you factor in the collateral damage. But incidents of death tend to generate a depressing view of war, as former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has observed, so a better kill ratio is of little comfort to those killed and their families, friends, and neighbors.

Now the power of the purse belongs to Congress under our tri-partite system of government. And all revenue bills must originate in the House of Representatives. Republicans recaptured the House barely 10 days ago. Will they, do you suppose, reorder America's priorities so we will spend more to help people heat their homes and less on killing Taliban in the Afghan desert? Surely, some skepticism is called for. The Republicans will no doubt want to know why we can't kill more efficiently. Between now and 2012, they will surely campaign on a promise of squeezing the "waste, fraud, and abuse" out of our killing campaigns so that we can kill more Afghans at a lower cost and thus save the American taxpayers money, while costing Afghanistan more lives. And if Afghanistan runs out of lives before we run out of money, we win! Ain't war wonderful?

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And heating homes? Well, isn't that something the people should be doing for themselves? Let them pick themselves up by their own made-in-China bootstraps and borrow money like the government does and maybe find some of those neat new jobs in the booming economy of India, where it will cost them less to heat their homes. America: love it or leave it; heat it or beat it!

But Americans need not go that far. It may be that the new Congress, which will take office in January, will encourage Americans to move to the Sunbelt, where there tend to be more jobs, anyway. The Sunbelt states tend to vote Republican in most elections and the greater their population, the greater their representation in Congress and the more electoral votes those states will have. And people living



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in the warmer climes will need far less home-heating assistance, allowing Congress to devote even more money to killing Afghans in the Middle East, where a shortage of heat is not often a problem, especially for the dead.

But in New Hampshire, which has the first presidential primary every four years, we like to pretty much stay where we are. Besides, the unemployment rate here is a little more than half of the national average, so we are not looking to move to the South for full employment. And we are voting Republican again, if only temporarily. It would not be wise for Republican House members to tell poor people in New Hampshire to go fry ice.

Besides, the whole rationale for these wars — what Tina Fey as Sarah Palin likes to call “all these wars we got goin’ on” — is American security. So how do you figure Americans are made more secure by shivering and possibly freezing in their homes so we can kill Taliban in a distant desert at \$50 million a kill?

And Americans who live in “bad” neighborhoods should feel even more secure in knowing that, suddenly and without warning, their doors might be knocked down by a joint task force fighting drugs with still more federal money. They might have made a mistake and arrived at the wrong dwelling unit, but don’t expect them to apologize. “Dynamic entry” in drug wars is like love in *Love Story*. It means never having to say you’re sorry. And don’t expect them to replace the door they knocked down. If you are poor and you have no fuel assistance, chances are you have no heat to escape through the open doorway, anyway, so it’s not costing you anything. So don’t even try taking the government to court. No harm, no foul.

We have been through this before. Experience and common sense both tell us that the funds for home-heating assistance will be restored (though the Constitution does not authorize them, but that’s another article), even if it means we will have to kill fewer people in Afghanistan (some of whom may actually be Taliban) this winter. Unless, of course, sanity has fully fled the Planet on the Potomac and the “reps” want to tell the American people that killing Afghans is a higher priority than keeping Americans safe and warm in their homes.

When Barack Obama left on his Asian tour, comedian Jay Leno said the President was going to India to visit American jobs. Then he would sojourn on to China to visit America’s money. Maybe he should take a trip to Iraq and Afghanistan and to the graveyards there where he can visit American lives lost and bodies buried.

At a mere \$50,000 a kill.

Photo: Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. and NATO commander and Ambassador Mark Sedwill, NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan (out of picture) address RUSI members on ‘The International Mission in Afghanistan’, at the United Services Institute in central London, Oct. 15, 2010: AP Images



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