



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on December 3, 2014

The UN's Afghanistan Debacle

On September 11, 2001 (widely known simply as 9/11), hijackers of four commercial airliners attacked the United States. Two of the planes crashed into New York City's Twin Towers leveling both; one slammed into the Pentagon in Northern Virginia; and one crashed into the ground near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Over 3,000 Americans perished, including the hijackers, passengers, and crews on the ill-fated planes.



Three days later, on September 14, 2001, the U.S. Congress passed legislation carrying the name "Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists." As have his predecessors for more than 60 years, President George W. Bush chose not to seek a declaration of war and, instead, speedily formed an international coalition of forces from several dozen nations. The targeted enemy was Afghanistan's Taliban, the Islamist force believed to be harboring al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden who was presumed to have masterminded the attack. President Bush demanded that Afghanistan deliver bin Laden for prosecution and also that the nation expel al-Qaeda even though no proof has ever been supplied that bin Laden and the al-Qaeda group he led were responsible for the attacks on 9/11.

On October 7, 2001, U.S. and British forces launched the invasion into Afghanistan known as Operation Enduring Freedom. As many as 40 other nations sent token forces (28 sent less than 100) while the U.S. total exceeded that of all of the others combined. On December 20, 2001, the United Nations Security Council created the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to serve as the overseer of all the action in Afghanistan. In 2003, the UN's regional arrangement known as NATO (see Articles 51-54 of the UN Charter) took over leadership of ISAF. Which means that, except for a very few days after 9/11, the United Nations has been in charge of the multi-nation effort against the Taliban.

It is now 13 years later and, although bin Laden was killed in a raid at his hideout in Pakistan, the Taliban has gained control over large portions of Afghanistan. No opposing forces of any kind dare travel one hour away from the nation's capital city, Kabul, for fear of attack by Taliban forces. The Afghan government's army, trained by the NATO coalition, refuses to confront the Taliban. And some within this army turn their guns on their trainers. In other words, the Taliban are winning and the entire nation could soon be under their control. What does the Taliban seek? An Islamist caliphate similar to what ISIS seeks over much of Syria and northwestern Iraq.

American forces have lost 2,350 dead during these 13-plus years. The UK suffered 453 killed, and all of the other nations combined have lost a total of 677. The number wounded, many very seriously, amounts to at least five times the number who paid the ultimate price.

What has been gained? Sadly, the answer is nothing, or next to nothing. The Taliban rule large portions of the nation and are poised to establish complete domination when the remaining foreign troops depart. No one doubts that the plotters of the 9/11 tragedy should have been brought to justice. But only Osama bin Laden, whose responsibility for the attacks that cost the lives of 3,000 Americans and more thousands of military personnel is dubious, has been dealt with.



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The Afghan operation and the 10-year campaign against Iraq that is now unraveling have one thing in common. It is that the United Nations has been in charge. The Iraq War was authorized by the UN from its inception. Keep in mind that whatever the world body authorizes, it oversees. And the War in Afghanistan has been controlled by the UN subsidiary NATO from its earliest days.

No American soldier, sailor, or marine should ever be sent into war without a declaration of war issued by the U.S. Congress. If Congress won't issue such a declaration, then troops should not be sent into any battle. But if Congress had taken that step, as the U.S. Constitution grants it sole power to do so, then the outcome of each of these struggles would have been a clearly recognized victory. Until the 1950-1953 conflict in Korea (still not completely settled), the U.S. had never lost a war. Now, with UN oversight, wars aren't won.

All of this is one more reason why the [U.S. should withdraw from the UN](#). The sooner the better.



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