



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on May 31, 2017

## **Kabul Bomb Blast Could Be Used to Justify Increase in U.S. Troops in Afghanistan**

A powerful bomb hidden inside a sewage tanker truck exploded during the morning rush hour in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, on May 31, killing at least 80 people, wounding hundreds more, and damaging nearby embassy buildings. Some have speculated that this bomb attack might influence U.S. policy on increasing troop strength in Afghanistan.



The area in which the blast occurred is one of the most secure parts of the city because of the large number of foreign embassies. Vehicles must pass through several checkpoints to enter that section of the city. Captain Bill Salvin, a U.S. military spokesman in Kabul, told CNN that a checkpoint had prevented the bomber's truck getting closer into the diplomatic quarter.

The victims appeared to have been mostly Afghan civilians, noted reports.

Both the German and French embassies sustained damage from the blast, but a spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy said it did "not appear to have been the target of the blast."

CNN reported that the Taliban denied responsibility for the attack in a statement and that no other group has yet claimed it. However, the Russian government-funded RT network, without naming the sources, reported that ISIS is reported to have claimed responsibility for the attack.

Though several reports about this bombing mentioned that the United States was already considering boosting its military presence in Afghanistan, it was the RT network that pointedly asked whether this attack might prompt the United States and its allies to go back into Afghanistan with more troops. RT quoted two individuals who thought such a troop increase was a possibility, including Middle East expert Ali Rizk, who told RT:

Currently, discussions are taking place in the White House. We have Trump's National Security Advisor Herbert McMaster [a member of the interventionist Council on Foreign Relations] — he has been advocating a plan to have a significant increase in troop levels in Afghanistan. On the other hand, we have the Chief Strategist in the White House Steve Bannon, who has been against such a plan. So there has been this discussion even before the attack; there has been this discussion in the White House of once again increasing troop levels in Afghanistan.

The May 31 bomb attack, Rizk continued, "might tilt the balance in favor of those who support an increase in the troop levels."



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Rizk also told RT:

This could have a great impact on U.S. troops going back to their former levels, establishing a larger presence for themselves in Afghanistan. We're also not sure how this will have an impact on NATO. But when it comes to American strategy itself it could contribute to fulfilling the wishes of those in the White House, who support generally speaking a troop increase in Kabul and Afghanistan in general.

RT also quoted Marwa Osman, a Beirut-based political analyst and lecturer at Lebanese International University, who suggested the attack — particularly given that it hit the diplomatic area of Kabul — might be retaliation for the “mother of all bombs” that the United States dropped on eastern Afghanistan in a strike against ISIS in April.

Osman does not rule out an increase of Western troops on the ground in Afghanistan. She told RT:

Now, the Pentagon will have “the green light, which “they give to themselves” to bring back troops to Afghanistan. The country “has been war-torn for the past 30 years because of the U.S. involvement to begin with.

In her opinion, President Trump might also ask NATO allies to increase their troops' presence in Afghanistan.

As the Trump administration — like the previous Obama and Bush administrations — considers whether to increase the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan, we might review why our troops were sent there in the first place, and whether that was a good decision. We should also consider why we still have troops there almost 16 years later.

The United States (along with the United Kingdom) invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 in what was called Operation Enduring Freedom. The invasion was in response to the Taliban government's refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda and supposed mastermind of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Though the invasion wrested control of most of the country from the Taliban, bin Laden fled the country and went into hiding in Pakistan until captured and killed by U.S. special forces in 2011.

With support from the United States and the UN-created International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Hamid Karzai was installed to head Afghanistan's transitional government, and was popularly elected in 2004. Karzai remained as president for 10 years.

Toward the end of Karzai's term, the Taliban reorganized and began to control more of the country. They have continued to wage an insurgency against the central government ever since. At the end of 2014, the U.S. and NATO combat mission in Afghanistan officially ended and the supposed withdrawal of troops was completed in December 2016. However, the United States still keeps 8,400 troops in the country to bolster the Afghani government against attempts to counter the Taliban resurgence. As with Iraq, our “withdrawal” of troops there was never quite completed. Though there is no constitutional authority to do so, our interventionist foreign policy has continued to make U.S. forces the world's policemen.

When President Bush first sought congressional authorization to send troops to Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks, Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas), the leading non-interventionist in Congress, made a statement on the floor of the House on September 14, 2001. In his statement, Paul noted that the Taliban were not a country and “to declare war against a group that is not a country makes the clear



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declaration of war more complex.”

Rather than going to war, Paul advocated using “the best tool the framers of the Constitution provided under these circumstances ... the power of Congress to grant letters of marque and reprisals, in order to narrow the retaliation to only the guilty parties.”

After stating his objections, Paul voted to give the president the authority to use force in Afghanistan. In the end, he supported the resolution to use force because it was the only option available and he believed doing nothing was unthinkable.

As a writer in *The Political Guide* observed:

After the military victory over the Taliban was achieved, Congressman Paul began attempting to reign in U.S. military presence there to avoid the vague and prolonged war he cautioned against in 2001. In 2002, Congressman Paul noted in a floor speech that war with Afghanistan was simply no longer necessary. He noted that the people who attacked us had already been defeated and to further destroy Afghanistan only to rebuild it out of some misplaced sense of duty was simply not necessary.

For years after the initial U.S.-led invasion, Congressman Paul continually noted that no war has been constitutionally authorized within Afghanistan — only the use of force against those responsible for the 9/11 attacks.

Paul retired from his House seat in 2013, but has continued to voice his opinions about U.S. foreign policy on a regular basis. His son, Rand Paul, became a U.S. senator representing Kentucky in 2011 and also has been outspoken on foreign policy and other issues.

In an October 2015 interview with CNN’s Wolf Blitzer, the younger Paul — who was a presidential candidate at the time — maintained that the United States should no longer be fighting the war in Afghanistan and that “the Afghans need to step it up and defend themselves.”

“I think this goes to a bigger question and this is the question President Obama should have to answer: Why are we still at war in Afghanistan? What is the U.S. objective, what’s the U.S. mission and why are we bombing anybody in Afghanistan?”

Paul — continuing the same argument his father had long used — said that while the United States “had a clear cut mission” in Afghanistan following the attacks of September 11, 2001, “that’s been long gone for many years now.”

The Kentucky senator, in true non-interventionist fashion, said the United States should avoid a “perpetual war” in Afghanistan and said Afghans “should be able to defend themselves” as the United States has poured billions of dollars in aid into Afghanistan.

Those who share Paul’s noninterventionist principles will hope that President Trump (who sounded noninterventionist during his presidential campaign) will consider the senator’s opinions more valuable than those of his CFR-member National Security Advisor Herbert McMaster.

The Kabul bombing, like the Baghdad and Manchester bombings, was tragic. But it does not justify sending more U.S. troops overseas.

Image of Kabul explosion: Screenshot of a [video posted on YouTube by Bookcountries](#)



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