



Obama Says Nation Has Marked a Milestone in Afghanistan

Speaking to both military and civilian personnel at Joint Base McGuire Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey, on December 15, President Obama thanked the troops for their extraordinary service and noted that “after more than a decade of war, our nation is marking an important milestone.”

According to President Obama,



Now, this month, in just two weeks, the transition that we’re making in Afghanistan will be complete. Afghans will take full responsibility for their security. This month, after more than 13 years, our combat mission in Afghanistan will be over. This month, America’s war in Afghanistan will come to a responsible end.

The president went on to deliver well-deserved recognition to the troops for their many sacrifices and accomplishments, such as:

You helped decimate the core al Qaeda leadership and deliver justice to Osama bin Laden. He will not be attacking here anymore. You helped to prevent terrorist attacks against this country. You helped push back the Taliban. You helped train Afghan forces to take the lead. You helped make possible a historic election this year and the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan’s history.

However, just as former President George W. Bush’s well publicized “Mission Accomplished” speech on the deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* on May 1, 2003 did not reflect that the U.S. mission — whatever it may have been — in Iraq had truly been accomplished (the October 6, 2003 cover of *Time* magazine featured the headline “Mission Not Accomplished”) Obama’s announcement that “America’s war in Afghanistan will come to a responsible end” is a bit premature.

As we noted in [our article on December 8](#), even though NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command (to which the United States provided 24,050 out of 34,512 personnel) formally ended its military deployment in Afghanistan on December 8, after January 1, NATO will maintain a force of 13,000 troops in Afghanistan, with as many as 10,800 of those being U.S. troops.

A December 8 report in Ireland’s *Independent* noted that the president recently allowed U.S. forces to launch operations against both Taliban and al-Qaeda militants, broadening the mission of the U.S. forces that will remain in the country. Americans also provide combat and air support to Afghan troops as is considered necessary, while Afghan President Ashraf Ghani is also considering resuming night raids that might include U.S. participation.



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 16, 2014

We reported last May that Obama had announced that while most U.S. troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, about 9,800 would remain. However, that withdrawal plan has been altered. Reuters reported on December 6 that outgoing Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced from Kabul that the United States will keep up to 1,000 more soldiers in Afghanistan than previously planned (10,800 as opposed to 9,800).

Even as he prematurely announced the end of U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan, Obama defended a continued interventionist military presence around the globe. “Now, this year is also a reminder that even as our combat mission ends in Afghanistan, there are still challenges to our security around the globe.... Which means we’re leading the global coalition against the brutal terrorist group ISIL in Iraq and Syria,” Obama said.

Most journalists call ISIL “ISIS,” but as Chuck Todd, the host of *Meet the Press* said, “Obviously we refer to it at NBC News as ISIS. The Obama administration, president, says the word ISIL. The last S stands for Syria, the last L they don’t want to have stand for Syria.”

And the reason the Obama administration does not want to call attention to ISIL/ISIS’s connection to Syria is that it does not want to draw attention to the fact that ISIS worked closely with the rebel forces attempting to overthrow the Assad regime in Syria and benefited from the aid that the United States supplied to those rebels. This was noted in an article by Jason Ditz for AntiWar.com on March 25, 2013:

The US involvement in smuggling weaponry to the increasingly sectarian [Syrian] civil war is liable to strain their relations with border nations, particularly Iraq which is seeing a surge in attacks from al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which is closely affiliated with Syria’s rebels and likely enjoying spillover perks from the arms smuggling operation next door.

As far back as 2012, *The New American’s* Alex Newman observed that “Western governments and the notorious al-Qaeda terror network have teamed up to bring down the relatively secular dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.”

When the Senate voted to approve Obama’s proposal to arm and train “moderate” Syrian rebels to fight against ISIS last September, Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) called the plan “ludicrous.” “No one knows where these arms are going to wind up.... We don’t even know who these groups are.... We need to stay the heck out of their civil war.... It is their war and they need to fight it,” Paul said.

Paul’s father, former Representative Ron Paul, offered his own strategy for fighting ISIS:

If you don’t like ISIS, just walk away and Syria and Iran will take care of them and they’ll get rid of all the radicals just as Saddam Hussein did. There was no al Qaeda in Iraq [when Hussein was president] and there is no al Qaeda in Iran.

Even as he championed the same interventionist foreign policy that his predecessors in the White House going back to Franklin D. Roosevelt had advocated, Obama seemed to suggest that he favored scaling back the military operations supporting that policy:

The time of deploying large ground forces with big military footprints to engage in nation-building overseas, that’s coming to an end. And going forward, our military will be leaner. But as your Commander-in-Chief, I’m going to make sure we keep you ready for the range of missions that we ask of you. We are going to keep you the best-trained, the best-led, the best-equipped military in the history of the world because the world will still be calling.

So the time of large-scale military operations to support “nation building” is coming to an end and our



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military will be “leaner,” but our military must still be the best-trained, the best-led, the best-equipped military — not because a well-trained, well-led, well-equipped military is vital to defending our own country — but because “the world will still be calling.”

Our founding fathers advocated just the opposite course of action: a strong military for the defense of our own nation, combined with a non-interventionist foreign policy not compromised by strong attachments to or alliances with other nations.

George Washington, who was not only the first president but a highly successful military commander, advocated a policy of having a strong defense combined with a foreign policy that would refrain from forming alliances. A few of his statements illustrate these views:

- “To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace.”
- “If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known, that we are at all times ready for War.”
- “Observe good faith and justice towards all Nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all.”
- “The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible.”
- “Sympathy for the favorite Nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification.”
- “It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world.”

Photo of President Barack Obama speaking at Joint Base McGuire Dix-Lakehurst: AP Images

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