



Written by [Patrick Krey](#) on November 24, 2009

Obama Sells Out to the Neocons

The Obama administration is close to announcing its decision to escalate the war in Afghanistan. Reuters reports that the "final number [of troops added to the war zone] could reach 35,000 once U.S. trainers are factored in, but estimates on the number of trainers vary widely. Obama would not be drawn out on specifics but said he would have an announcement on how to proceed after this week's Thanksgiving holiday."



This comes after months of deliberation where [self-proclaimed](#) leaders of the conservative movement have complained that Obama has been "dithering" in his decision to send more troops into the meat-grinder known as Afghanistan. General Stanley McChrystal, the Commander of U.S. Forces to Afghanistan, set off [a firestorm of controversy from right-wing critics](#) when his request for more troops was leaked to the public. The President's critics complained that he wasn't listening to the generals on the ground. Former Vice President Dick Cheney said the following:

I worry that there's a lack of understanding of what this means from the perspective of the troops.... You know, if you're out there on the line day in and day out and putting your life at risk on a volunteer basis for the nation and you see the Commander in Chief unable to or appearing to be unable to make a decision about the way forward here — you know that raises serious doubts.

Similarly, former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin joined in on the Beltway Right strategy of trying to retake the White House by rallying for "war, war and more war!" In an [interview](#) with Fox News's Greta Van Susteren, Palin complained that Obama was not escalating foreign quagmires fast enough for her.

I want to see ... a surge strategy in Afghanistan.... I want our President and this administration to listen to the advisers who they hired ... McChrystal, for one, back in March, telling the President, "Here's what we're going to need there" and then ramping up that advice lately, saying, "Mr. President, here's what we need in Afghanistan to win, to make sure that those terror cells don't grow, so that those terrorists don't come back over to the homeland in America, on our soil, and kill innocent Americans."

Other top voices in the conservative movement repeated the neoconservative, pro-war stance that has come to dominate both the Republican Party and many activists on the Right. Notorious [neocons](#) William Kristol and Robert Kagan clamored for Obama to escalate the Afghanistan conflict in an article entitled "[No Substitute for Victory: Don't abandon Afghanistan](#)" featured in the neoconservative *Weekly*



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Standard.

Despite efforts by political operatives around the president to push him toward withdrawal now, the president may yet do the right thing — soon, please — and provide General McChrystal with the forces he needs to pursue decisive operations in 2010. And the president might put real effort into explaining his decision and the war's importance to the American people.

Tragically, it appears that Obama is doing exactly what his neoconservative critics desired. The [Obama-enamored media](#) is trying to spin the 35,000 troop escalation as a pragmatic compromise but [Antiwar.com](#) reports that the troop build-up only reflects how over-extended the U.S. Armed Forces are.

The Pentagon had maintained it only had a little over 30,000 troops in spare manpower however, so while President Obama's escalation can be portrayed as a "compromise" the reality is it is about as large as the military could withstand. It will put America's Afghan presence just over 100,000 troops, at a time when almost 120,000 troops remain in Iraq.

This is an increase in U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan of over 300 percent from 32,000 at the start of 2009. The cost alone associated with sending more forces over is staggering. Obama's Office of Management and Budget [estimated](#) the cost per for every additional service member at \$1 million. Spending in Afghanistan on the war has [more than doubled over](#) the last year with \$6.7 billion spent in June alone. Add this to the sickening fact that the United States just suffered the deadliest month in its eight-year war with 59 deaths in October. Civilian casualties have [also been climbing](#) up to 202 in September from 168 in August.

Obama vows that he will "[finish the job](#)" in Afghanistan to the cheers of warmongering neoconservatives but the simple question is: at what cost, Mr. President? How many more billions will be spent? How many more U.S. service members will perish or suffer serious injuries? And how many more innocent civilians need to die or be maimed in this endless military occupation/nation-building project? The administration refuses to answer those tough questions but it appears they are already planning to [increase troop levels](#) well into 2011.



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