



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 8, 2010

U.S. Bankrolling of Afghan Security Forces

President Barack Obama set a date of July 2011 to begin withdrawing U.S. troops from Afghanistan. This does not, however, mean that the United States will cease pouring billions of taxpayer dollars into the country at the same time.



In fact, Obama's withdrawal from the graveyard of empires is looking increasingly like his [sham "end of combat" in Iraq](#). Administration officials have for some time now been [playing down](#) the July 2011 deadline as merely the beginning of a long, slow process of turning power over to the Afghan government. And just as in Iraq, American influence in the form of troops and treasure is likely to remain for a long time to come.

The latest evidence of this comes from a NATO training mission document obtained by the Associated Press. The document, says the AP, indicates that the United States will probably be spending "about \$6 billion a year training and supporting Afghan troops and police" from now until 2015, serving as "an acknowledgment that Afghanistan will remain largely dependent on the United States for its security."

The AP adds:

The training mission document outlines large-scale infrastructure projects, including a military hospital and military and police academies, aimed at "establishing enduring institutions" and "creating irreversible momentum."

Spending for training is projected to taper off from \$11.6 billion next year to an average of \$6.2 billion over the following four years. Much of the reduction reflects reduced spending on infrastructure.

The Obama administration recently announced that it intends to ramp up the total Afghan army and police force from nearly 250,000 today to more than 300,000 by late next year. The mission will be largely paid for by the United States, with smaller contributions from NATO allies. The projected multibillion-dollar cost of maintaining those forces would be inconceivable for Afghanistan's small economy without foreign aid.

That \$11.6 billion next year, added to this year's spending, comes to the same amount — over \$20 billion — that the United States spent on training from 2003 to 2009.

To perform all this training, General David Petraeus has asked for 2,000 more soldiers, according to a NATO official speaking on condition of anonymity.

Training Afghan security forces — and then keeping them — has been difficult. "Illiteracy, corruption and desertion" have been major problems, says the AP, and they do not appear to be abating. U.S. Lt. Gen. Bill Caldwell, head of the NATO training mission, wants to increase Afghan security forces by



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56,000 persons by October 31, 2011; yet even he “has predicted that desertion and injury rates are so high among Afghan forces that NATO will have to recruit and train 141,000 people” in order to end up with the number it needs, according to the report.

In addition, even if Caldwell is able to get the security forces up to full staffing, Afghanistan still faces the problem of being able to pay them. The AP writes: “The NATO document shows that the U.S. will end up footing most of the bill.” Afghan President Hamid Karzai has, in fact, [stated](#) that his country won’t be able to pay for its own security forces until 2024.

Of course, as the AP points out, Congress could always refuse to fund such training. However, regardless of which party controls each chamber over the next several years, few legislators want to be charged with sabotaging the Afghanistan mission. Those who want to have it both ways, posturing as anti-war but voting for the funding anyway, can spin their yeas as votes for winding down the war.

The strategy of training native security forces to take the burden off the United States has not worked well in either Iraq or Afghanistan. [In Iraq](#), U.S. forces engaged in a gun battle with suicide bombers on September 5 — five days after the President declared the “end of combat” there. The U.S. presence (and concomitant funding) is likely to continue well beyond 2011 — possibly for another decade, if the Iraqi army chief of staff gets his wish. In Afghanistan, as noted earlier, recruiting and retaining security personnel has been extremely difficult, and U.S. forces are not likely to be withdrawn with any alacrity.

Both unconstitutional wars have cost the American people much blood and treasure. Afghanistan alone has run up a \$300 billion tab, [according](#) to the Center for Defense Information, and the United States appears poised to pour tens, if not hundreds, of billions more into its futile mission there.

No politician wants to be the one to “ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake,” in the words of John Kerry. But at some point every war must come to an end or else bring ruin upon the quarreling nations. Delaying the end of the Afghan occupation merely digs America deeper into debt and abets terrorist recruitment, putting off the difficult but inevitable decision to terminate the war before it terminates our country.

Instead of spending billions more that we don’t have, let’s bring the troops home, cut off the unconstitutional foreign aid, and thereby force the Afghans to stand on their own two feet. Any people that can withstand British, Soviet, and American occupation can handle petty thugs within their own ranks.

Photo of Afghan soldier: AP Images



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