



Written by on July 31, 2009

Advisers Call for Afghanistan Troop Buildup

Voice of America (VOA) News reported on July 29 that Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) — a member of the strategic assessment team working with General Stanley McChrystal, the new U.S. military commander in Afghanistan — has advised that the U.S. government and its allies need to be more realistic about what is needed to win the Afghan war, and that may include more troops.



"This war has been fought without resources, but above all without realism," said Cordesman, who was once a national security assistant to Senator John McCain on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Cordesman recently came back from Afghanistan, where he was one of about a dozen analysts who formed an assessment group that spent more than a dozen hours meeting with McChrystal over the past month, advising the commander about improving U.S. military strategy. Speaking to reporters on July 26, Cordesman indicated he believes more U.S. troops are needed. "If you don't provide those resources and additional brigade combat teams, if you do not, I think, effectively move the Afghan security forces toward doubling them. I think unless we're prepared to commit those resources. If we somehow believe that a civilian surge of 700 people and tailoring our force posture to the views of a completely different set of strategic priorities, this is going to win, the answer is no, it's going to lose," he said.

Cordesman expressed impatience with some NATO allies whom he believes have not taken the situation in Afghanistan seriously enough and who do not recognize the need for more effort to fix it. He described the international aid effort in Afghanistan, now in its eighth year, as being conducted as if it were in its first year, and having little impact. "What should be an integrated civil-military effort and a focus on winning the war in the field, is a dysfunctional, wasteful mess focused on Kabul and crippled by bureaucratic divisions," he said.

The *Washington Post*, citing members of the advisory group that met with the general in Kabul, reported on July 31 that McChrystal is inclined to request an increase in American troops to implement the new strategy that proposes major changes in the U.S. and NATO troop operations, a vast increase in the size of Afghan security forces, and greatly increased military effort to root out corruption among local government officials. Though the general appears ready to request more troops, senior military officials said he is waiting for a recommendation from the strategic assessment team before reaching a final decision on the troop request.

The *Post* quoted a senior military official in Kabul, who said: "There was a very broad consensus on the part of the assessment team that the effort is under-resourced and will require additional resources to get the job done."



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In a report on the meeting of the strategic assessment team with McChrystal, Reuters cited "prominent analysts" who said in public comments and in interviews with the news service that the commander will need more forces even after personnel levels reach 68,000 U.S. troops — plus 30,000 allied NATO troops — later this year.

Stephen Biddle, a military analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington who was part of the team meeting in Kabul, said a "sizable reinforcement of the U.S. troop count" would be necessary. General McChrystal is also a member of the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), whose main office is in New York.

An article in the *Washington Independent*, "So Who Were the Advisers for McChrystal's 60-Day Afghanistan Review?" provided a complete list of the strategic assessment team that advised General McChrystal's 60-day Afghanistan review strategy. Citing a conference call from Stephen Biddle after his return to Washington, the article noted that Biddle explained:

It wasn't so much that they advised the review. A group of about a dozen civilian experts, mostly from Washington think tanks, were the review. When Defense Secretary Bob Gates asked McChrystal to send him an assessment of the war's fortunes and the resources necessary to turn it around, the civilian experts were flown to Baghdad to conduct the "overall assessment," Biddle said. Officers from the USFOR-A headed "subtopic" groups of "particular interest to Gen. McChrystal like civilian-casualty minimization, strategic communication and so forth." But the band of (mostly) Beltway think-tankers were the review.

The list of attendees, which the *Independent* presumably obtained from Biddle, started off with the "big three": Andrew Exum of the Center for a New American Security, Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Stephen Biddle of the CFR.

Exum was quoted in the *Washington Post*: "McChrystal understands that you don't stop IEDs [improvised explosive devices] by putting your soldiers in MRAPs," heavily armored trucks designed to withstand blasts. You stop them by convincing the population not to plant them in the first place, and that requires getting out of trucks and interacting with people." The Center for a New American Security was founded in 2007 and doesn't have much of a track record, but in June 2009, a writer in the *Washington Post* opined, "In the era of Obama ... the Center for a New American Security may emerge as Washington's go-to think tank on military affairs."

The other heavy hitter in attendance was Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), who, as noted previously, formerly served as national security assistant to Senator John McCain of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The CSIS has been described by some as "a CFR front group" because of the connections of some of its more prominent members to the CFR. The center was founded in 1964 by Admiral Arleigh Burke and Ambassador David Manker Abshire, a member of both the Council on Foreign Relations and, until his appointment as ambassador to NATO, the Trilateral Commission. CSIS officials who are also CFR members include:

- Current president and CEO, John Hamre, who was a former Deputy Secretary of Defense;
- The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, former Senator Sam Nunn;
- The following members of the CSIS board of trustees: Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, William Cohen, and Brent Scowcroft;
- Its Transnational Threats Director, Arnaud de Borchgrave;
- "Notable current and past members": Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the Ronald Reagan



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administration Fred Iklé and former Clinton Administration Secretary of State Madeleine Albright

Considering that Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who asked General McChrystal for an assessment of the war, and McChrystal are both CFR members, and the CFR's notable influence among the civilian experts flown in to impact McChrystal's 60-Day Afghanistan Review, it is evident that the war in Afghanistan is very much a CFR-controlled operation.

Considering that the same was also true of the protracted, no-win war in Vietnam, this does not bode well for either U.S. foreign policy for the foreseeable future, nor the patriotic young men and women the U.S. establishment is fond of sending to die in support of their internationalist agenda.

Image: General Stanley McChrystal



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