



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on October 12, 2009

McCaffrey: 10 More Years of War in Afghanistan

Retired General Barry McCaffrey told MSNBC's Meet the Press Sunday that the United States faces 10 more years of war in Afghanistan.

Asked by NBC's David Gregory about British General Sir David Richards' remark in August about staying in Iraq 30 or 40 years longer, McCaffrey claimed the United States needs another 10-year commitment in Afghanistan. Of the policymakers in the Obama administration, McCaffrey [said](#):



They've got to decide are we in, are we going to stay for 10 years and build a viable state? Or do we try and downsize, watch our allies disappear, watch the Pakistanis go unstable? My guess is they've got a political decision that's unbelievably difficult. The country isn't with him, his party isn't with him.

McCaffrey [told](#) Gregory that the way to "win" in Afghanistan is to take the focus away from counterterrorism strategy, lower expectations, and focus upon a long and expensive nation-building process for Afghanistan's tribal culture. "Well, I, I think in 10 years of \$5 billion a month and with a significant front-end security component, we can leave an Afghan national army and police force and a viable government and roads and universities. But it's a time constraint that we can't change things in 18 to 24 months. So I think we got to lower expectations."

Building roads and universities and other social welfare projects — in essence New Deal-style make-work projects for another country — was just what Republicans demanded George Bush not do when he first invaded Afghanistan and Iraq. And it is precisely what was done under the Bush administration. The "new" Obama strategy is to do more of the same, even as American soldiers keep dying in these seemingly endless wars.

For his part, Republican Senator Lindsay Graham of South Carolina said most Republicans are willing to support the President's efforts in Afghanistan. And Graham supports keeping American troops in Afghanistan forever, if casualties are brought to a minimum after a period of years. Asked "Are we there forever?" by David Gregory, the "moderate" Republican [expressed full support](#) for permanently expanding the American empire:

Well, I think the issue is how long will we be there sustaining casualties like we are today? We've been in Germany and Japan since World War II and most Americans don't care because it's made the world a more stable place and we're not suffering casualties.

The U.S. military as social welfare agency would have two goals, [according to](#) McCaffrey. "You have to



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do two things here.... So you've got to secure the country against a re-emergent Taliban and have benchmarks and measurements on the Afghan government to get them to perform better for their people. You have to do two things at once. It's exactly what we did in Iraq."

Protecting America from terrorism didn't make his list. The problem with using Iraq as the success model is that American soldiers are still fighting and dying in Iraq more than a year after the surge supposedly ended. Though both the Bush and Obama administrations have claimed we are "winning" in Iraq, we have yet to win. And [recent violence](#) indicates that perhaps Iraq may be backsliding. Both wars were initially justified on the basis of fighting international terrorism, but McCaffrey made no claims that either Iraq or Afghanistan face any present terrorist threat to the United States.

Whatever happened to the "no nation-building" pledge? It is gone like too many promises of politicians from both parties.

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