



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on August 16, 2010

Petraeus: No “Winning,” Firm Withdrawal Date from Afghanistan

U.S. Commander for Afghanistan General David Petraeus told NBC’s “Meet the Press” August 15 that he prefers not to talk about “winning” in the Afghan war, and that Obama’s deadline for withdrawal of U.S. troops from the war-torn nation of July 2011 was a flexible guideline where only a “couple of thousand” U.S. soldiers may be sent home by that date.

Asked by NBC’s David Gregory about when U.S. forces can declare victory in Afghanistan, Petraeus [replied](#):



I’m always leery of using terms, actually, like “winning” because it seems to imply that, you know, you just find the right hill out there somewhere, you take it, you plant the flag, and you go home to a victory parade. I don’t think that’s going to be the case here. I think this is going to — and I’ve said this repeatedly when I was a Central Command commander, even before that, that this was going to require a substantial, significant commitment and, and that it is going to have to be enduring to some degree, again, albeit its character and its size being scaled down over the years.

With Obama’s battlefield commander talking in terms of the U.S. commitment being “scaled down over the years,” and the Obama pledge to remove troops within a year, the Obama administration seems poised to [break yet another campaign pledge](#). Petraeus noted that the Obama administration has already begun backtracking on its pledge to remove U.S. combat soldiers from Afghanistan by July 2011, [telling Gregory](#) that “Vice President Biden has also commented on it. He said recently, I think, it could be as little as a couple of thousand troopers who go home next July. Again, that remains to be seen, and it would be premature to have any kind of assessment at this juncture about what we may or may not be able to transition.”

Therefore, Petraeus [told Gregory](#) he wasn’t troubled by the political promises made by the Obama administration to the American people. “I don’t find it that stifling. I’m not bowed over by, you know, the knowledge that July 2011 is out there. In fact, the president has been very clear, Vice President Biden’s been very clear as well, more recently, that this is a date when a process begins that is



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conditions based. And as the conditions permit, we transition tasks to our Afghan counterparts and to security forces and, and in various governmental institutions, and that enables a 'responsible drawdown of our forces.'"

This likely postponement of withdrawal is despite the substantial build-up of troops in Afghanistan today. Petraeus [noted](#) that "by the end of August, of course, we will have nearly tripled the number of U.S. forces on the ground, we'll have expanded the non-U.S. NATO forces, tripled the number of civilians, increased the funding to enable 100,000 more Afghan national security forces, and so on."

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