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U.S. Commander Predicts Long Afghanistan Stay

McKiernan forecast difficulty ahead, adding: "Even with these additional forces, I have to tell you that 2009 is going to be a tough year." McKiernan said that the 17,000 extra troops were "roughly two-thirds of what I asked for."



The *Washington Post* reported that the bulk of the initial buildup of U.S. troops will go to Taliban strongholds in the ethnic Pashtun heartland of southern Afghanistan, where foreign and Afghan troops are, "at best, stalemated," said McKiernan. "Those forces are aimed at being operational by the highest part of the insurgent fighting season this summer and to be in place and operational before the projected elections in August."

The 17,000 additional troops will bring total U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan up to around 55,000. An AP article in the *Army Times* for February 19 reported that an additional 10,000 U.S. soldiers could be sent to Afghanistan in the future.

During his statement to the press, General McKiernan said that it is "in our vital national security interest to succeed" in Afghanistan. It's a country that is absolutely worth our commitment. And it's a region that is absolutely worth the commitment of the international community to ensure that it's stable at the end of this."

Meanwhile, as if to make the U.S.-NATO mission in Afghanistan just a bit more challenging, Kyrgyzstan's parliament, as expected, voted 78-1 on February 19 to evict U.S. personnel from Manas air base, the last remaining U.S. air base in Central Asia used as a transit point for 15,000 troops and 500 tons of cargo each month to and from Afghanistan. "Once all the procedures are over, an official eviction vote will be sent and after that the United States will be given 180 days to wrap up operations at the air base," Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev said following the vote.

The base closing will exacerbate the ongoing difficulty caused by Taliban militants attacking supply convoys that bring supplies to NATO forces through the Khyber pass from Pakistan. Reuters news service reported that one of the alternate supply routes will soon be tested when the first shipment of non-military goods originating from NATO member Latvia will be sent to Afghanistan through Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

During an appearance on *The NewsHour* on PBS on February 18, Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, was asked how the Obama administration views the possibility of victory in Afghanistan. "First of all, the *victory, as defined in purely military terms, is not achievable*, and I cannot stress that too highly," answered Holbrooke. "What we're looking for is the definition of our vital national security interests." (Emphasis added.)



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Holbrooke described his recent trip to the region and upcoming visits by delegations from Pakistan and Afghanistan to Washington as "a manifestation of a new, intense, engaged diplomacy designed to put Afghanistan and Pakistan into a larger regional context and move forward to engage other countries in the effort to stabilize this incredibly volatile region."

As we've observed before, Holbrooke is a member of the board of directors of the elite, internationalist policy organization, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). The day after Holbrooke appeared on PBS, Greg Bruno, a CFR staff writer, made some interesting observations in his "Daily Analysis" posted on the CFR website. The thrust of that analysis, entitled "[NATO in Afghanistan](#)," is summarized by its lead-off sentence: "After seven years of urging coalition countries to beef up troop commitments in Afghanistan, Washington appears to have concluded *the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) cannot be relied upon to provide the 'hard power' needed to counter Taliban gains.*" (Emphasis added.)

This, in itself, is hardly a new revelation. Starting with Korea, in every conflict controlled by the UN or one of its "Chapter VIII regional arrangements" (as NATO is officially designated), the United States has provided the lion's share of money and matériel and shed most of the blood.

Bruno quoted NATO's Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's statement at the annual NATO international security conference in Munich: "When the United States asks for a serious partner, it doesn't just want advice, it wants, and deserves, someone to share the heavy lifting." He also observed that American troops in Afghanistan have a standing joke that ISAF (the acronym for NATO's International Security Assistance Force) stands for "I Saw Americans Fight."

Bruno does cite an opinion that runs counter to Richard Holbrooke's statement that "victory, as defined in purely military terms, is not achievable." It is from Seth G. Jones, an Afghanistan expert at the RAND Corporation, who said that if U.S. and NATO forces change strategy to exploit the militants' weaknesses, instead of ignoring them, the war may still be won. He does add a very disturbing qualifier, however. He writes: "To get there [victory], though, Washington will likely need to shoulder the bulk of the burden. Some of the United States' most ardent supporters — notably the British — are showing strains from extended conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan."

So that's it? If the British no longer maintain a stiff upper lip, it falls on Americans to do so?

In a way, this summarizes a major defect in U.S. foreign policy that has existed ever since the the Council on Foreign Relations in the United States and the CFR's sister organization in England, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA), were created in the aftermath of World War I and began influencing the decades-long move toward global governance, including using military forces to police the world. That defect is the extent to which the United States is relied upon to provide the policing, and to do so under the command of international bodies like the UN. (American internationalists, when confronted with this defect, argue that the remedy is to increase the involvement of others, rather than America minding its own business and staying out of foreign quarrels.)

Shortly after the Armistice that ended World War I was signed on November 11, 1918, a group of internationalists (including Woodrow Wilson's mentor, Edward Mandell House) met at the Majestic Hotel in Paris on May 30, 1919, to lay the foundations for both the CFR and RIIA. Afterwards House and Wilson campaigned for the ratification of the Treaty Of Versailles and the creation of the League of Nations. The League held its first council meeting in Paris on January 16, 1920, six days after the Versailles Treaty came into force.

But the U.S. Senate wisely voted on March 19, 1920 against ratifying the badly flawed Treaty of



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Versailles (e.g., its oppressive reparations contributed directly to the rise of Naziism in Germany), thus eliminating the possibility of U.S. participation in the League. It would take another world war to convince the Senate to ratify U.S. participation in the league's successor, the United Nations.

Put into larger historical context, by the onset of World War I, the once-mighty British Empire was past its prime and the United States was cajoled into becoming a surrogate for Britain by abandoning its longstanding principle of foreign policy — the Monroe Doctrine — to send troops to France and "make the world safe for democracy."

The institution of the CFR and RIIA and the founding of the League of Nations were attempts to revive the worldwide influence of the British Empire after the tired British nation no longer had the resources (in population, industrial might, and intestinal fortitude) to maintain it. That's where the United States came in — it was rich in all three attributes. Victory in the Spanish-American War showcased the young United States as a rising world power. British internationalists and their fawning American Anglophile sycophants, such as Wilson and House, engineered a system wherein the internationalists in London and New York would provide the brains — and the mighty American heartland would provide the brawn — to police the world. The scenario has since repeated itself over and over, in a never-ending succession of wars.

Afghanistan is but the latest square on the internationalist-insiders' chessboard.

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