



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on October 29, 2009

U.S. Paying Taliban Who Claim to Switch Sides

The U.S. Government will soon begin paying Taliban members who claim to switch sides in the insurgent war in Afghanistan, according to a report by the BBC.

[The BBC report](#) noted that the Obama administration is trying to emulate the "success" in Iraq, where the U.S. government has paid off insurgents who switch sides under a program called the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP). "In Iraq, the money can also be given to insurgents provided they switch sides," the BBC noted, "the same authority is being given to US commanders in Afghanistan."



Expansion of the \$1.6 billion CERP program, ordinarily restricted to reconstruction aid such as bridge and infrastructure contracts, is being allowed under the [National Defense Authorization Act of 2010](#), which President Obama signed into law October 28. [Christian Science Monitor](#) noted that \$1.3 billion is being set aside for the "reintegration" program, as it is called, "to support the reintegration into Afghan society of those individuals who have renounced violence against the Government of Afghanistan."

The idea is bound to be controversial in American circles, as it amounts to paying people who have been shooting at American soldiers. The plan also may not work. "There is a well-known saying in Afghanistan," [CNN.com noted](#) of the story, "You can rent an Afghan, but you can't buy him." This may also turn out to be the case with Iraqis who have been bought off through the same program. Last Sunday Iraq was [rocked](#) with the worst series of bombings in years, with more than 160 killed and 700 injured. The general violence level in Iraq has been [lower](#) in the past two years, but death rates from violence have crept back up since the summer beginning after the ["Bloody Wednesday" blast](#) in August, CNN.com noted.

Of course, paying the Taliban is precisely what got the United States into the whole Central Asian mess in the first place. It was the U.S. funding of Osama bin Ladin's war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan that created al Qaeda and the Taliban in the first place. Osama bin Ladin was a [CIA asset](#) during the war against the Soviets (both Osama and the CIA were funding the Taliban throughout the 1980s), just as the drug-kingpin brother of Afghan President Hamid Karzai is reputed to be a CIA asset today. Al Qaeda was the group primarily responsible for the September 11 attacks on the United States, and they were only able to do so with the state sponsorship from the Taliban's Afghanistan.

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