



Defense Orientation Conference Association

Live: Virtual Conference

# CONFERENCE READ AHEAD

Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020

8:00AM to Noon PDT via Microsoft TEAMS

## Afghanistan Withdrawal and Future Stability

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, nineteen years ago, terrorist attacks on U.S. soil triggered an international conflict in Afghanistan. With President George W. Bush in command, Americans deployed to Afghanistan to root out the terrorists behind the attacks. They toppled the al-Qaeda's sanctuary in less than two months but beginning in 2002, the U.S. clung to a strategy for rebuilding core institutions of the Afghan State and defeating the Taliban in its entirety. A new government was successfully put in command of Afghanistan by 2004. The rebuilding phase transitioned into counterinsurgency in 2008 under President Barak Obama. Counterinsurgency doctrine temporarily increased troop presence in 2009. The goal was to protect the Afghan society from Taliban attacks. In 2011, there was an attempt to gradually hand over security responsibilities. Despite the attempts of transition, the Afghans were not able to keep the Taliban at bay, and the number of civilian casualties remained high. The U.S. and NATO concluded their combat mission in 2014, making the 13-years of war the longest war the U.S. has ever fought. However, some U.S. forces remain in country, along with their NATO counterparts.

Many in Washington and elsewhere fear that a full US troop pull-out would leave a vacuum that could be filled by the Taliban and other militant groups such as ISIS. These enemies seek to plot attacks in the West and secure control across Afghanistan, for the Taliban controls more territory than they did when significant NATO troops left in 2014. Insurgency against the American-led coalition by the Taliban continues to cost the U.S. (more than 2,300 Americans), Afghans (62,000 national security forces, 31,000 civilians). In somewhat of a "stalemate," and under the Trump Administration, a peace deal was signed to begin the U.S. forces withdrawal over the span of 14 months. Challenges have arisen at every turn since then, and peace negotiations continue between the key parties. DOCA members will learn more about these current challenges and what steps may be taken in the future to achieve a full withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghan soil. We will get an update of the status of US and NATO military forces in Afghanistan, and describe the plan going forward to secure and maintain the peace and support the Afghanistan government. Discussions will highlight efforts to strengthen its nation's security, economy and commerce, civil rights and social equality, and other key aspects of their country.



## When to Withdraw

### Trump Eyes May 2021 for Total U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan

*Tony Bertuca, Inside Defense (September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020)*

Barring unwillingness or inability Taliban, Trump administration will start withdrawing troops November 2020 to conclude May 2021.

### Esper says US troop presence in Afghanistan will be 'less than 5,000' by November

*Justin Wise, The Hill (August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020)*

The Trump administration and the Taliban earlier this year signed a historic deal with the goal of ending the U.S. presence in Afghanistan.

### Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy: In Brief

*Congressional Research Service (June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020)*

U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan appears closer to an end, considering the February 29, 2020, signing of a U.S.-Taliban agreement on the issues of counterterrorism and the withdrawal of U.S. and international troops.

## Challenges in Afghanistan

### DOD: Afghan Air Force Airstrike Ops Improving, Struggles in Maintenance

*Brian W. Everstine, Airforce Magazine (July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020)*

Afghan forces continue to rely on heavily on U.S. provided contractor support for their weapon systems. Additional training, advise, and Assist Command-Air will be ways to help transition a troop withdrawal.

### Iran Is Our Top Priority, Says Senior US Commander in Middle East

*Katie Bo Williams, Defense One (August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020)*

The threat against forces from Shiite militant groups has caused the U.S. forces to put resources that they would otherwise use against ISIS to provide for U.S. defense.

### Afghan Women and Girls: Status and Congressional Action

*Congressional Research Service (September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020)*

The status of Afghan women and girls has improved since 2001 by some metrics, but arguably remains precarious.

### Afghanistan: Issues for Congress and Legislation 2017-2020

*Congressional Research Service (August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020)*

Some issues include the size of, and legal authorization for, the U.S. military presence in the country, executive branch transparency and regular reporting requirements, the purposes for U.S. aid, and conditions under which it can be obligated, and the role of women in Afghan society, government, and the military.

## Petitions for Withdrawal

### Years after they fought in Afghanistan, US troops watch as their children deploy to the same war

*J.P. Lawrence and Phillip Walter Wellman, Stars and Stripes (October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020)*

President Donald Trump has been vocal about ending the U.S.'s "forever wars," repeatedly tweeting that he wants to "bring our soldiers home."

### Thousands of US Troops Will Remain in Afghanistan Past Christmas

*Katie Bo Williams, Defense One (October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020)*

National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien on Friday said that some 2,500 U.S. troops will remain in Afghanistan beyond Christmas.