

Rethinking U.S. Policy on Afghanistan

Exhibit A: The Cost to Ordinary Americans

Financial Cost

US Cost of Afghan War at the end of September 2010: **\$336 billion**¹

That is nearly **\$2,500 per household in the US!**



Loss of Life

US Casualties (as of January 18, 2011)

- **1,384 dead**
- **9,256 wounded**

8% of the U.S. soldiers killed were **under 21 years of age**² – not even old enough to drink!

Constitutional Balance of Powers



The Constitutional balance of powers envisioned by the founding fathers has been upset by the war in Afghanistan.

- Claims of **executive privilege** in lawsuits against the government have been used more often than ever before, even regarding unclassified documents.
- Excessive **secrecy** has eroded the ability of Congress and the Supreme court to hold the President accountable for his actions.
- President Obama is following in the footsteps of George Bush in terms of secrecy. **The trend has been set.**

Civil Liberties

In the aftermath of 9/11, the U.S. government initiated an unprecedented – and secret – **surveillance program that spies on Americans** every day.

In 2006, this **unconstitutional, warrantless wiretapping** was signed into law through the National Security Surveillance Act which allows the government to procure individuals' phone records, internet activity, e-mails and instant messages without requiring a warrant.



The Protect America Act 2007 grants broad surveillance authority with **negligible oversight** to the NSA.

Use of Torture

Corroding the wisdom of the Sixth Amendment, the government has used the War on Terror to unconstitutionally **suspend habeas corpus** to foreign detainees, and the use of torture to elicit information.

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Check out our new website on
Afghanistan

Coalition for Peace Action
609-924-5022
www.peacecoalition.org



Some Reasons Why We Need a New Policy?

A new approach to Afghanistan is necessary simply because the old one is not working. However, the answer does not lie in a troop surge, but in the acknowledgement that the military is only one part of a multi-pronged approach.

What Do the Afghans Think?³

The Afghans themselves are not too pleased with the United States' performance, and while they support a new approach, they are not convinced that that new approach should be a surge in troops.

- The approval of U.S. performance has fallen to 32% in 2009 from 68% in 2005.
- 25% of Afghans – twice as many as in 2005 – now believe that it is justified to target American soldiers.
- Only 18% of Afghans believe that the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan should be expanded.

The Poppy Trade⁴

For example, the poppy trade in Afghanistan has not been addressed adequately. Not only does Afghanistan now produce 93% of the world's poppy (used to make heroin), estimates suggest that up to \$1 billion of this may be earned by the Taliban. And as if to mock us, it is widely believed that President Hamid Karzai's brother is himself a drug smuggler.

The current approach is to pay private military contractors to burn these fields at \$6800 per acre. Not only has this been negligibly successful, it has also alienated Afghan farmers and not affected the Taliban's income. A better approach would be for the United States to clamp down on the drug trade in one of two ways: either subsidize wheat so that Afghan farmers have an incentive to produce it, or buy the poppy crop directly from farmers.

Recommendations for a Changed Policy in Afghanistan

Rethinking Military Solutions

- Establish a systematic plan for withdrawal from Afghanistan
- Emphasize training of the Afghan Army

Preventing Civilian Casualties

- Cease drone strikes and air strikes on civilian populations
- End the use of cluster bombs and landmines

Establishing a Sustainable Non-Military Policy

- Focus on cutting the Taliban's supply lines by, for example, eradicating their share of poppy income, and through efforts to curtail their foreign support.
- Support negotiations among all parties involved in order to lay the foundations of a sustainable political environment.
- Increase long term humanitarian and development aid, while creating credible checks and balances

¹ Data from *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*, Congressional Research Service.

² Data from Icasualties.org, a site that compiles data from the US Department of Defense and other reliable sources.

³ Data from *2009 National Poll of Afghanistan*, ABC News. Available at <http://abcnews.go.com>

⁴ Some data from *Inside the Afghan Poppy Wars* by Armen Keteyian. Available at <http://www.cbsnews.com>