



# Afghanistan and Iraq

## In This Chapter

- ❖ Executive Summary

### **Afghanistan**

- ❖ Background
- ❖ The 2001 Invasion of Afghanistan
- ❖ Increasing Troop Levels and Timeline for Withdrawal
- ❖ Timeline of Recent Major Events
- ❖ Recent Controversies
- ❖ Afghanistan Talking Points

### **Iraq**

- ❖ The 2003 Invasion of Iraq
- ❖ Shiite vs. Sunni and the Political Instability of Iraq
- ❖ Iraqi Self-Governance and Domestic Politics
- ❖ The Surge
- ❖ The Withdrawal of U.S. Military Forces
- ❖ Looking Forward
- ❖ Iraq Talking Points
- ❖ Analysis of Costs and Spending for Iraq and Afghanistan

Paid for by the National Republican Congressional Committee and not authorized by a candidate or candidate's committee. [www.NRCC.org](http://www.NRCC.org)

*Not Printed at Government Expense.*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

While U.S. combat troops have completely withdrawn from Iraq and are in the process of being drawn down in Afghanistan, the issues surrounding the ongoing instability, violence and unrest in the Middle East continue to affect and have serious implications for U.S. foreign policy and security moving forward. This chapter is an in-depth look at what led up to the U.S. involvement in both Afghanistan and Iraq, where things stand now and what things look like moving forward.

### **Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a crucial front in the global struggle against the al-Qaeda terrorist network and Islamic radicalism. Known historically as the “graveyard of empires,” Afghanistan began its slide into instability in the 1970s through the power struggle between the Soviet Union and Afghan Islamic militias, or mujahedin. Although Communist forces (Soviet forces combined with Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, or DRA, military forces) outnumbered the Islamic militias, the mujahedin benefited from U.S. weapons and assistance provided through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). By 1989, Soviet forces completely withdrew from Afghanistan leaving in place a weak government.

As the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union improved, both nations agreed to a joint cutoff of military aid to the mujahedin. By the early 1990s, the weak Afghan government fell, and the mujahedin rose to power which exposed the differences within the mujahedin and led to internal conflict. Because of this, the more conservative and fundamentalist Islamic clerics and students, mostly of Pashtun origin, formed the Taliban movement. Once considered moderate during the anti-Soviet war, four years of this war created popular support for the Taliban who began turning against the United States in the mid-1990s.

Once the Taliban regime took power in 1996, then-leader of al-Qaeda Osama bin Laden relocated to Afghanistan from Sudan where he had been recruiting Arab fighters during the anti-Soviet war. Then-head of the Taliban, Mullah Muhammad Umar, refused U.S. demands to extradite bin Laden to the U.S., worsening relations and support with and from the United States. Even further, the regime’s strict adherence to Islamic customs, employing harsh punishments including executions, and its extreme oppression of women caused it to lose additional international and domestic support. The Clinton Administration opened talks with the Taliban in 1994, but was unable to moderate its policies, and relations worsened through the Taliban rule. Throughout 2001, but prior to the 9/11 attacks, the Bush Administration’s policy differed little from the Clinton Administration’s – applying economic and political pressure on the Taliban while retaining some dialogue with them.

In response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Bush Administration decided to militarily overthrow the Taliban when it refused a final U.S. offer to extradite bin Laden in order to avoid military action. On Sept. 12, 2001, the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) issued Resolution 1368 that “...expresses its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond (implying force) to the September 11 attacks.” While this was widely interpreted as a U.N authorization for military action, it did not explicitly authorize Operation Enduring Freedom. In Congress, both the Senate and the House passed a joint resolution which was signed into law (P.L. 107-40) on Sept. 18, 2001, that stated, “...all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons.”

The United States and United Kingdom (UK) launched Operation Enduring Freedom on Oct. 7, 2001, with the purpose of removing the radical Taliban regime from Afghanistan and capturing bin Laden. A U.S.-led coalition dealt the Taliban a devastating military defeat in November 2001, and completely removed it from power replacing it with a democratically-elected government. Then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced an end to “major combat,” on May 1, 2003. In December 2004, the country was renamed the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai became the first democratically-elected president of Afghanistan and The National Assembly was inaugurated the following December.

**Despite the removal of the Taliban in 2001, and the progress made towards building a stable central government, the war in Afghanistan has never truly stopped.** To try to slow the deterioration of security in Afghanistan, the United States and its allies decided to increase force levels by partly fulfilling a mid-2008 request by then-Commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan General David McKiernan for 30,000 additional U.S. troops. On March 27, 2009, President Obama announced that an additional 21,000 troops, rather than the 30,000 requested, would be sent to Afghanistan in the first half of 2009. General McKiernan was replaced by General Stanley McChrystal in May 2009, and McChrystal assessed that 44,000 additional U.S. combat troops (beyond those approved by the Obama Administration in March 2009) would be needed to have the greatest chance for his new strategy’s success. Finally, after much publicized delay, President Obama announced that he would deploy an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan on an accelerated timeline to reinforce the 68,000 American and 39,000 non-U.S. NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops already in the country, bringing U.S. levels close to 100,000. In conjunction with the troop surge announcement, President Obama also announced that there would be a transition beginning in July 2011, to Afghan leadership of the stabilization effort and a corresponding beginning of a drawdown of U.S. force levels.

On May 2, 2011, Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan by a team of U.S. Special Operations Forces in a raid. The transition to Afghan leadership began, as planned, in July 2011, and is continuing. It is set to unfold in seven tranches of areas in Afghanistan with each area of transition expected to take about 12 to 18 months each. Despite recent successes, Republicans generally view Afghanistan as a complex challenge with long-term implications including continued combat deaths of our military men and women. As of this writing, there have been nearly 1,900 U.S. casualties in Afghanistan.

## Iraq

The continued refusal of Saddam Hussein to acceptably acknowledge or cooperate with UNSC resolutions regarding its weapons programs over a period of 12 years ultimately led to a U.S.-led coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003. The invasion, under the codename Operation Iraqi Freedom, commenced after the United States and several allies determined that Iraq’s alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) posed an imminent threat to their national security and interests, especially in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The initial invasion was a quick and decisive military victory over the Hussein regime for the coalition. However, a resulting insurgency by Islamic militants, internal sectarian combatants and former members of the overthrown regime in Iraq using unconventional tactics created unexpected and prolonged challenges for the U.S. military and coalition forces.

In November 2008, after lengthy negotiations with the outgoing Bush Administration, the Iraqi Parliament approved a status of forces agreement (SOFA) with the U.S. government that established that U.S. combat forces would withdraw from Iraqi cities, villages and localities no later than June 30, 2009, and would require a complete withdrawal of U.S. combat forces no later than Dec. 31, 2011. In February 2009, President Obama announced his own plan to withdraw troops from Iraq which accelerated the timeline laid out in the

Bush Administration-negotiated SOFA. Under the plan laid out by President Obama, the majority of U.S. combat forces would withdraw by August 2010, leaving 50,000 troops in a supporting role until the end of 2011. In late August 2010, the final U.S. military combat brigade withdrew from Iraq, leaving behind 50,000 support troops. On Dec. 18, 2011, the full withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq was completed.

The United States seeks a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq with a just, representative and accountable government. However, Iraq's political progress is relatively tentative and fragile, but continues in the right direction. Permanent stability is more than likely not yet attainable, but hopefully the strengthening of democracy and institution-building and a turning of Iraqi official attention toward basic governance and economic issues will continue to push Iraq in that direction.

## AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a crucial front in the global struggle against the al-Qaeda terrorist network and Islamic radicalism. The Taliban is a radical Islamic theocratic government that rose to power in a series of civil wars in Afghanistan, which were prompted by the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the country in 1989 after 10 years of occupation. The Taliban ultimately assumed control of the country in 1996, but their government was not generally recognized by the international community. The Taliban provided support and safe-harbor to al-Qaeda prior to the 9/11 attacks on the United States and refused to cooperate with the United States in bringing the terrorists behind the attacks to justice.

### Background

Afghanistan has a history of a high degree of decentralization, and resistance to foreign invasion and occupation. Some have termed it the “graveyard of empires.” Through differing regimes of widely varying ideologies, Afghanistan’s governing structure has historically consisted of weak central government unwilling or unable to enforce significant financial or administrative mandates on all of Afghanistan’s diverse ethnic communities or on the 80 percent of Afghans who live in rural areas.

**The Soviet Union vs. Mujahedin:** Afghanistan’s slide into instability can be traced back to the power struggle between the Soviet Union and Afghan Islamic militias, or mujahedin, in the 1970s. Former Afghan King Zahir Shah, believing it would limit Soviet support for Communist factions in Afghanistan, built ties to the Soviet government by entering into a significant political and arms purchase

relationship with the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s. The Communist Party and Islamic movements grew in Zahir Shah was overthrown by his cousin, Mohammad

overthrown and killed in April 1978, by the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) – a Communist faction. Two PDPA military officers were put in charge of Afghanistan and attempted to impose radical, socialist change on Afghanistan’s traditional Islamic society which sparked rebellion by Islamic parties opposed to such modernization. In December 1979, the Soviet Union sent troops into Afghanistan to prevent any further gains by the mujahedin and replaced PDPA leadership with one that was more pliable.

During this occupation period, Soviet forces combined with Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) military forces. Although these Communist forces outnumbered the Islamic militias, the mujahedin benefited from U.S. weapons and assistance, provided through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Partly because of the effectiveness of the U.S. weapons in shooting down Soviet helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, the Soviet Union’s losses mounted. Finally on April 14, 1988, then-leader of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to a United Nations-brokered accord (the Geneva Accords) requiring it to



diametrically opposed strength during this time until Daoud, who was later

withdraw from Afghanistan. Within a year, the withdrawal was completed leaving in place a weak government headed by the director of Afghan intelligence, Najibullah Ahmedzai.

**The Rise of the Taliban:** As the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States improved and the Soviet Union collapsing in 1991, Moscow and Washington agreed to a joint cutoff of military aid to the mujahedin. A total of about \$3 billion in economic and covert military assistance was provided by the U.S. to the mujahedin from 1980 until the end of Soviet occupation in 1989. From this point on, U.S. assistance to Afghanistan remained at relatively low levels validating some of the views that the United States largely considered its role in Afghanistan “completed” once Soviet troops left the country. The Najibullah government held power until falling in 1992 and being replaced by the mujahedin regime. This rise to power exposed the differences among the mujahedin parties and an internal conflict between the more moderate members and the Islamist conservatives arose. Because of this internal conflict, in 1993 and 1994, Afghan Islamic clerics and students, mostly of rural, Pashtun origin, formed the Taliban movement.

The original Taliban leaders were actually considered moderate Islamist during the anti-Soviet war, but began turning against the United States in the mid-1990s. The four years of civil war created popular support for the Taliban as able to deliver stability and the Taliban began gradually taking control of province after province until finally, in 1996, the Taliban took control of the capital city, Kabul. Taliban gunmen entered a U.N. facility in Kabul, seized Najibullah, his brother and aides and hanged them.

Once the Taliban regime took power, then-leader of al-Qaeda Osama bin Laden relocated from Sudan, where he had been recruiting Arab fighters during the anti-Soviet war, to Afghanistan in 1996. Mullah Muhammad Umar, the then-head of the Taliban, forged a political and personal bond with bin Laden and refused U.S. demands to extradite him. The Taliban lost international and domestic support as it imposed strict adherence to Islamic customs, employing harsh punishments including executions. Authorizing its “Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice,” the Taliban used physical punishments to enforce strict Islamic practices including bans on television, western music and dancing. It also prohibited women from attending school or working outside the home, except in health care, and publicly executed some women for adultery. The Taliban’s policies caused different Afghan factions to ally into an anti-Taliban opposition called the Northern Alliance. Even though the Northern Alliance was supplied with Iranian, Russian and Indian financial and military support, they continued to lose ground to the Taliban. By the time of the September 11, 2001 (9/11), attacks, the Taliban controlled at least 75 percent of the country.

The Clinton Administration opened talks with the Taliban in 1994, but was unable to moderate its policies and relations worsened throughout the Taliban rule. The Taliban’s hosting of al-Qaeda’s leadership gradually became the Clinton Administration’s overriding agenda item with Afghanistan and withheld recognition of the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. After the 1998 al-Qaeda bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the Clinton Administration began to strongly pressure the Taliban to extradite bin Laden, imposing U.S. sanctions on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and achieving adoption of some U.N. sanctions as well. Throughout 2001, but prior to the 9/11 attacks, the Bush Administration’s policy differed little from the Clinton Administration’s – applying economic and political pressure on the Taliban while retaining some dialogue with it. One significant departure from Clinton Administration policy, though, was the Bush Administration stepped up engagement with Pakistan to try to reduce its support for the Taliban.

## The 2001 Invasion of Afghanistan



“This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.”

~President George W. Bush, address to the Nation following 9/11 terrorist attacks, Sept. 11, 2001



In response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Bush Administration decided to militarily overthrow the Taliban when it refused a final U.S. offer to extradite bin Laden in order to avoid military action. The Administration sought and obtained U.N. backing – U.N. Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1368 of Sept. 12, 2001, said that the UNSC “...expresses its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond (implying force) to the September 11 attacks.” While this was widely interpreted as a U.N. authorization for military action, it did not explicitly authorize Operation Enduring Freedom. In Congress, both the Senate and the House passed a joint resolution which was signed into law (P.L. 107-40) on Sept. 18, 2001, that stated “...all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, *or harbored such organizations or persons.*”

**Operation Enduring Freedom:** On Oct. 7, 2001, the United States and United Kingdom (U.K.) launched Operation Enduring Freedom with the purpose of removing the radical Taliban regime from Afghanistan and capturing Osama bin Laden. It consisted primarily of air-strikes on Taliban and al-Qaeda forces, facilitated by the cooperation between reported small numbers of U.S. special operations forces and CIA operatives. A U.S.-led coalition, along with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance forces, dealt the Taliban a devastating military defeat in November 2001, and completely removed it from power, replacing it with a democratically-elected government. Then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced an end to “major combat,” on May 1, 2003.

**Post-Taliban Government:** Taking the view that leaving the region after the 1989 Soviet pullout allowed Afghanistan to degenerate into chaos, the Bush Administration decided to try to build a relatively strong Afghan central government and economy. This effort, which many called “nation-building,” was supported by the U.N., international institutions and U.S. partners in several post-Taliban international meetings.

Afghan factions opposed to the Taliban met at a U.N.-sponsored conference in Bonn, Germany in December 2001, creating an interim government and establishing a process to move toward a permanent government. Under the “Bonn Agreement,” an Afghan Interim Authority was formed and took office in Kabul on Dec. 22, 2001, with Hamid Karzai as Chairman. The Interim Authority held power for approximately six months while preparing for a nationwide loya jirga (Grand Council) in mid-June 2002 that decided on the structure of a Transitional Authority. The Transitional Authority, headed by President Hamid Karzai, renamed the government as the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA). One of the TISA’s primary achievements was the drafting of a constitution that was ratified by a Constitutional Loya Jirga on Jan. 4, 2004. In December 2004, the country was renamed the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai became the first democratically-elected president of Afghanistan and The National Assembly was inaugurated the following December. Karzai was re-elected in November 2009 for a second term.

**Despite the removal of the Taliban in 2001, and the progress made towards building a stable central government, the war in Afghanistan has never truly stopped.** A resurgent Taliban and continuing provincial instability - particularly in the south and the east - remain serious challenges for the new Afghan Government. In the post-invasion and initial defeat of the Taliban, the U.S.-led coalition was unable to

create a stable postwar political situation because of Afghanistan's fractious politics, shattered and long-neglected infrastructures, economic reliance on the poppy/opium market, and limited domestic and foreign aid. Skepticism toward the government runs deep among many Afghans, and many see the police in particular as a corrupt and predatory organization. Furthermore, the radical Islamic movement behind the Taliban was not completely eradicated and along with Pakistan, the coalition has failed to crack down decisively on Taliban forces along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Consequently, the Taliban has made a limited but significant comeback in recent years, partly due to the geography of the region, seeking safe haven in the cavernous mountains along the border with Pakistan and partly due to the sentiments and fears of many of the people in the region. This resurgent menace threatens to endanger Afghanistan's hard-won progress. The Obama Administration's strategy review in late 2009 narrowed official U.S. goals to preventing terrorism safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The elements of the Obama Administration's strategy during 2009-2011, however, continued, or in some cases expanded, the nation-building programs put in place by the Bush Administration

**In order to ensure that Afghanistan does not again become a safe-haven for terrorists, we must ensure a complete military defeat of the Taliban and wage a long-term integrated political and economic development campaign. We must educate Afghans that their interests are better served by an inclusive democratic government than by a radical Islamic regime.**

***Editor's Note:** To learn more about the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, please visit the [U.S. State Department's profile page](#) or the [CIA World Fact Book](#).*

### **Increasing Troop Levels and Timeline for Withdrawal**

Despite the additional resources put into Afghanistan, violence increased significantly in Afghanistan in mid-2006. Throughout 2008, growing concern took hold within the Bush Administration regarding the situation in Afghanistan. To try to slow the deterioration of security in Afghanistan, the United States and its allies decided to increase force levels by partly fulfilling a mid-2008 request by then-Commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan General David McKiernan for 30,000 additional U.S. troops. The decision whether to fulfill the entire request was deferred to the next Administration. In 2006, U.S. troop levels were at 30,000; climbed slightly to 32,000, by December 2008; and reached 39,000 by April 2009.

On March 27, 2009, President Obama announced that an additional 21,000 troops would be sent to Afghanistan in the first half of 2009. Despite approving most of Gen. McKiernan's request for 30,000 additional forces, on May 11, 2009, then-Secretary of Defense Gates announced that Gen. McKiernan would be replaced by General Stanley McChrystal as Commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan (USFOR-A). Gen. McChrystal assumed command on June 15, 2009. Additionally, President Obama announced a "comprehensive" strategy for Afghanistan and stated that he would consider Afghanistan and Pakistan as two countries but one challenge, focusing more intensively on Pakistan than in the past, and calling for more significant increases in U.S. and international support, both economic and military, linked to Pakistani performance against terror.

After assuming command, Gen. McChrystal assessed the Afghan security situation and stated in August 2009, that about 44,000 additional U.S. combat troops (beyond those approved by the Obama Administration in March 2009) would be needed to have the greatest chance for his new strategy's success. **On Dec. 1, 2009, after much publicized delay in his decision making, President Obama announced that he would deploy an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan on an accelerated timeline to**

reinforce the 68,000 American and 39,000 non-U.S. NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops already in the country, bringing U.S. levels close to 100,000. Akin to the surge strategy in Iraq implemented under former-President Bush, the troops would target and depress insurgent forces and better secure population centers. President Obama also announced, in conjunction with the troop surge announcement, that there would be a transition beginning in July 2011, to Afghan leadership of the stabilization effort and a corresponding beginning of a drawdown of U.S. force levels. As Afghans take on responsibility for their security, the United States will continue to advise and assist Afghanistan's Security Forces.



“We are here so that Afghanistan does not, once again, become a sanctuary for transnational extremists the way it was when al-Qaeda planned the 9/11 attacks and the Kandahar area conducted the initial training for the attackers in training camps in Afghanistan before they moved on [to] Germany and then to U.S. flight schools.”

~then-Commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, appearance on MSNBC's *Meet the Press*, Aug. 15, 2010



**Republican Position on the Afghanistan Surge:** While there had been debate over the details of the plan, specifically over the merit of imposing arbitrary timelines on troop withdrawals, Republicans were generally supportive of the strategy to increase our military presence in Afghanistan to help depress the counterinsurgency and secure the region. It is also critical that we ensure that our troops have the equipment and support they need to do their jobs.

Despite recent success, Republicans generally view Afghanistan as a complex challenge with long-term implications. It is a poor nation that lacks an ethnic and economic bond – and has been consumed by decades of violence. Ensuring peace and promoting a strong democratic government in Afghanistan is in our vital national interests. The process will require patience and sound strategic planning in order to provide the Afghan people with hope and better opportunities for the future.

### Timeline of Recent Major Events

**Marjah Offensive:** On Feb. 12, 2010, NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – along with soldiers from the Afghan National Army – launched a major offensive against Taliban forces in the city of Marjah located in the Helmand Province, one of the last remaining insurgent strongholds in Afghanistan. The operation, codenamed Moshtarak (“Together” in Dari), was described as the largest joint operation of the war in Afghanistan with more than 15,000 troops participating in the offensive.

After a few weeks of fighting, U.S. and Afghan forces were able to take control of the town and the Afghan government officially installed Abdul Zahir Aryan as the new administrator on Feb. 25, 2010. According to press reports, more than 700 residents gathered to witness the ceremony, which took place amidst a number of residents returning home and more shops opening for business. (“[Afghanistan Government Claims Taliban Stronghold.](#)” *Alfred de Montesquion, Associated Press; February 25, 2010*)

**McChrystal Relieved:** On June 23, 2010, President Obama accepted the resignation of Gen. McChrystal as Commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan after summoning him to Washington, D.C., to discuss comments made by him and his staff to a reporter for *Rolling Stone* magazine about President Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and the Obama foreign policy team that appeared in an article profiling the general. President Obama named General David Petraeus, the heroic commander who oversaw the successful troop surge strategy in Iraq and had been serving as head of United States Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

This marked the second change in command in Afghanistan during the Obama presidency and occurred at a difficult time. The U.S. had already delayed a planned summer offensive in the Kandahar province and resistance from a resurgent Taliban in southern Afghanistan had been tougher-than-expected. Public support for the war had dropped sharply and President Obama announced a timetable for withdrawal where U.S. forces would start to come home in July 2011.

**Lisbon Summit and the Security Transfer:** In a November 2010, conference in Lisbon, Portugal, NATO members agreed to hand over full responsibility for security in Afghanistan to Afghan forces by the end of 2014, with the transition of relatively stable areas beginning in July 2011, coinciding with the beginning of the U.S. troop drawdown. Despite the declaration, many in the West and the Afghan parliament expressed skepticism that Afghan political and military institutions will be strong enough to assume full responsibility for security by the 2014 deadline.

In late April 2011, hundreds of Taliban fighters, escaped from an Afghan government prison in the city of Kandahar, in what was considered a blow to the political authority of President Hamid Karzai. The prison break was followed by a two day raid taking place in early May 2011, where Taliban fighters temporarily wrested control over parts of the city from the Afghan Government. The Taliban was quickly driven out and control of the city was restored to government forces, but the episode exposed weaknesses in the government ability to coordinate security and provide stable control, embarrassing President Karzai.

**Petraeus Moves to CIA:** In early May 2011, then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced his retirement and President Obama named then-CIA Director Leon Panetta as his successor. To fill the vacancy left by Panetta, the President chose Gen. Petraeus, making it the second time in under a year that the top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan had been changed. On July 18, 2011, Marine Corps General John Allen took over for Petraeus as the top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan.

**Osama bin Laden's Death:** On May 2, 2011, Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan by a team of United States Special Operations Forces (SOF) in a raid conducted by the CIA, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU, or SEAL Team Six) and the 106<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) of the Joint Special Operations Command. Osama bin Laden, mastermind of numerous terrorist attacks including 9/11, and leader of al-Qaeda, was shot and killed. U.S. forces took bin Laden's body (which was later buried at sea) as well as several hard drives and other materials during the course of the raid. After years of searching for bin Laden's whereabouts, U.S. intelligence efforts finally revealed that bin Laden had been residing in a compound in the suburbs of Abbotabad, Pakistan, a town best known for its military academy. The raid was ordered without consulting the Pakistani government, in a move that Pakistan claims is a violation of its national sovereignty.

Bin Laden's close proximity to Pakistani military installations as well as its suburban setting has led many to believe that Pakistani officials had been protecting bin Laden which has degraded the already strained U.S.-Pakistan relationship. In fact, these suspicions were cited by then-CIA director Leon Panetta as the reason why the U.S. did not notify Pakistan of the raid, since the U.S. was concerned elements of the Pakistan intelligence community would alert bin Laden ahead of time. The weeks following bin Laden's death have

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**“The death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of American forces is a victory for the United States and a tremendous achievement for the military and intelligence professionals who carried out this important mission. Their tireless work since 9/11 has made this achievement possible, and enabled us to capture or kill thousands of al-Qaida terrorists and many of their leaders.”**

~former Vice President Dick Cheney on the death of bin Laden, May 2011

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

seen U.S. public opinion of Pakistan fall dramatically as U.S. officials attempt to determine the level of Pakistan's complicity in concealing bin Laden's whereabouts from the U.S.

**Transition and Troop Drawdown:** The transition to Afghan leadership began, as planned, in July 2011, and is continuing. It is set to unfold in seven tranches of areas in Afghanistan with each area of transition expected to take about 12 to 18 months each. As preparations got under way to transition the first tranche of areas, then-Gen. Petraeus's recommendations about the size of the initial drawdown were submitted in mid-June 2011. According to his recommendations, and those of then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, the U.S. military recommended a gradual drawdown in which the overwhelming majority of the surge forces would be in combat through the end of 2012.

On June 22, 2011, President Obama announced that he would order 10,000 U.S. troops to return home from Afghanistan by the end of 2011. At the time of this writing, that drawdown has been accomplished making U.S. force levels in Afghanistan about 90,000. Secondly, another 23,000 forces, the remainder of the surge forces, would be removed by September 2012. Following that drawdown, about 68,000 U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan though the President indicated that he plans for a complete troop withdrawal by the end of 2014. A decision on a drawdown plan for the remaining forces, from 2012 until the 2014 transition completion, is to be decided at a NATO meeting in Chicago in May 2012.

The president's plan is more a rapid drawdown than what top Pentagon officials had favored, reflecting growing fiscal and political pressures at home. President Obama's decision to overrule the advice of some of his commanders was made because he believes the accelerated drawdown is possible because of military gains by U.S. and coalition forces since he launched the surge in December 2009. President Obama stated that the surge had succeeded and "the tide of war is receding," with the death of Osama bin Laden, the disarray of al-Qaeda and the Taliban being on their heels. Despite behind-the-scenes disagreement, military leaders for the most part publically supported the President's decision.

President Obama's call drew quick criticism from both sides, with conservatives warning that a quick withdrawal would threaten recent gains and with liberals saying it is not quick enough.

Serious concerns still exist about whether the withdrawal will thwart military plans to shift some security responsibilities to Afghan forces and plans to shift troops to eastern Afghanistan next year, blocking Taliban entry routes from Pakistan and clearing them out of strongholds in the area. Military experts are saying publicly that the withdrawal's second phase comes at a bad time - during the typical peak of the fighting season in the summer - threatening the success of the whole campaign.

The top U.S. forces commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Allen, made it clear in interviews in late December 2011, that U.S. forces, without specifying a number, would likely remain even after the 2014 transition, and possibly for several years after.

The following story by *The New York Times* explains some of the specific concerns of military leaders:

## **The New York Times**

June 22, 2011

### **2012 Troop Pullback Worries Military Experts**

By THOM SHANKER

WASHINGTON — On Afghanistan’s battlefields, the most significant effect of President Obama’s latest orders will be felt at this time next year, when as many as 23,000 American troops who would have been on missions at the peak of the summer fighting season will instead be packing for home.

“This will make it more difficult, if not impossible, military experts said, for the commanders to carry out one of their major goals for next year.

“Senior officers said their military campaign plan for 2012 envisioned building on security gains earned by troops who had already flowed into Afghanistan’s south and southwest, with plans to turn some of those areas over to local forces. This would have freed American troops to pivot toward the vulnerable eastern border with Pakistan, but these forces may now be sent home.

“Mr. Obama’s plan, announced Wednesday, has two stages. In the first, the United States will withdraw 10,000 troops by the end of this year, or about double what the military had desired. In the second, 20,000 additional troops, the remainder of the 2009 surge, will be withdrawn by the end of next summer.

“His commanders can manage the first stage, according to a range of officers who are currently involved in the campaign or have served in Afghanistan. It would leave a substantial percentage of the surge force on the ground past the season when fighting traditionally slows in October and November as mountain passes freeze, preventing insurgents and supplies from traveling across the rugged borders from safe havens in Pakistan.

“‘Bringing 10,000 out by December is more than the military wanted, and quicker than the military wanted, but it is doable without any major impact on the ground plan this year,’ said Lt. Gen. David W. Barno, who retired from the Army in 2006 after serving as the senior American commander in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005.

“‘But putting a September 2012 expiration tag on the rest of the surge raises real concerns,’ added General Barno, now a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, a policy research center. “That’s the middle of the fighting season.”

“Michael O’Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, another policy research center, said the September pullout date really means that many of those troops will stop carrying out their missions months earlier.

“The president’s timetable, he said, ‘will require troops to spend most of the summer on the downsizing effort when they arguably should spend most of the summer fighting and taking away safe havens from extremists.’

“Mr. O’Hanlon and General Barno said it was hard to fathom the military logic of setting a withdrawal deadline for the surge right in the middle of the fighting season. ‘This is a rushed ending to what has been a fairly effective surge,’ Mr. O’Hanlon said.

“Even after the withdrawal of the surge forces — an initial 30,000 plus 3,000 other support troops — the American presence in Afghanistan will be a considerable force of 68,000. But there will be less opportunity for carrying out the full counterinsurgency campaign planned by commanders.

Afghanistan's own security forces will number 300,000 by the end of the year, although questions about their professional ability remain.

“Administration and Pentagon officials said Gen. David H. Petraeus, the commander in Afghanistan, had pressed for a less rapid withdrawal. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who visited Afghanistan in recent weeks, also had warned against risking the success of the surge with a speedy withdrawal. But the president's new order was preferable to even more accelerated proposals to withdraw all of the surge forces by early next summer.

“In writing his campaign plan for Afghanistan, General Petraeus was said to have paid close attention to what the military calls ‘battlefield geometry,’ which is the flexible shape, number and location of forces on the tactical map.

“His plan would turn some security duties over to Afghan forces gradually, with American and allied troops stepping back from areas as they are pacified.”

### **Recent Controversies**

The vast majority of Afghans generally appreciate the need for foreign forces to secure Afghanistan, but there have been recent signs that the public welcome of foreign forces might be eroding.

**Koran Burning by Florida Pastor:** On March 20, 2011, Reverend Terry Jones of the 30-person Christian congregation at Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Fla., burned a copy of the Koran in a portable fire pit. A mob in Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan, incited by the Koran burning, attacked a U.N. compound killing seven U.N. employees. In Kandahar, related protests left nine dead and more than 90 injured. Demonstrations in other Afghan cities followed, including anti-U.S. slogans and posters echoing the Taliban's anti-U.S., anti-Western rhetoric.

**Koran Burning by U.S. Soldiers:** In February 2012, five U.S. service members were involved in the incineration of a pile of Korans in Afghanistan. They had been removed from Bagram Airfield detention center on suspicion that books were being used by insurgents to plot while in detention. Although U.S. officials said it was accidental, the burning incited a week of protests that left 30 Afghans dead. The burnings were cited for the deaths of six U.S. personnel killed by Afghan security personnel taking revenge for the action between February 20 to March 7, 2012.

**Kandahar Civilian Massacre:** On March 11, 2012, U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales allegedly went on a shooting rampage in southern Afghanistan murdering eight Afghan adults and nine children. At the time of this writing, Bales was formally charged on March 23, 2012, with 17 counts of murder and six counts of assault and attempted murder and is being held at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. The “reason” for the killings has not been verifiably confirmed or established at this time by U.S. military officials, but at this time, Bales, pending a full military investigation, faces the possibility of a death penalty on charges of premeditated murder.

These incidents have exacerbated underlying tensions as U.S. Forces struggle to maintain stability and good relations with a local Afghan population that has grown increasingly hostile to the continued U.S. presence there. On March 20, 2012, General John Allen, the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, offered testimony before the House Armed Services Committee that he was optimistic that, despite the setbacks, that the overall strategy was working.

Despite the incidents, President Obama appears intent to stick with his original timeline for withdrawal, which will bring home an additional 23,000 troops by September 2012, and accounted for the drawdown in his fiscal year (FY) 2013 budget by reducing the amount requested for overseas contingency operations (OCO) (which are primarily used to fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq). The \$88.5 billion requested by the President for FY 2013 OCO is \$26.6 billion below the fiscal 2012 enacted budget of \$115.1 billion. While a significant amount of this reduction was due to the Iraq drawdown, this number also reflects savings due to operational progress in Afghanistan and the transition to Afghan responsibility for security.

***Editor's Note:** For information on specific votes regarding OCO funding and appropriations taken in the 112th Congress, please contact the NRCC.*

## **AFGHANISTAN TALKING POINTS:**

- We owe our brave men and women in uniform a debt of gratitude for their selfless service to our nation. It is critical that we ensure that our troops have the equipment and support they need and that their families also get the care and attention they deserve on the home front.
- Afghanistan has been a crucial but dangerous front in the War on Terror. We face a complex and dangerous terrorist threat even today. We must remain vigilant in our efforts to defeat our terrorist enemies and protect the American people.
- The new Afghanistan strategy includes long-standing objectives that help to ensure that Afghanistan will not be allowed to slip back into chaos and become a safe-haven for terrorists again.
- The tragic events of 9/11 more than 10 years ago remind us that we are all Americans and that what unites us as Americans is far greater than what divides us. The hard-working men and women of the United States Armed Services and intelligence officers have performed valiantly, including those involved in the removal of Osama bin Laden.
- Casualties – <http://www.defendamerica.mil/fallen.html>

## IRAQ

Immediately following the completion of the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq on Dec. 18, 2011, relations among Iraq's major political factions worsened substantially threatening its stability. In line with Iraq's history, Sunni and Shi'ite factions continue to clash politically and territorially which threatens to undo the relatively peaceful political competition and formation of cross-sectarian alliances that had emerged since 2007 after years of sectarian conflict and violence. Roughly 16,000 U.S. personnel, including contractors, remain in Iraq under State Department authority in order to exert U.S. influence and mentorship. In February 2012, more than likely in response to Iraqi leaders asserting increased independence from the U.S., the State Department said it is considering a significant reduction in U.S. personnel in Iraq.

### The 2003 Invasion of Iraq



The continued refusal of Saddam Hussein to acceptably acknowledge or cooperate with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions regarding its weapons programs over a period of 12 years ultimately led to a U.S.-led coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003. The invasion, under the codename Operation Iraqi Freedom, commenced after the United States and several allies determined that Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) posed an imminent threat to their national security and interests, especially in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The objectives of the invasion were to end the totalitarian regime of Saddam Hussein, eliminate any WMDs, eliminate Islamic militants, distribute humanitarian aid, secure Iraq's infrastructure and assist in establishing a democratic government as a model for other Middle East nations. British, Australian, Polish and Danish forces participated in the invasion.



The initial invasion was a quick and decisive military victory over the Hussein regime for the coalition. However, a resulting insurgency by Islamic militants, internal sectarian combatants, and former members of the overthrown regime in Iraq using unconventional tactics created unexpected and prolonged challenges for the U.S. military. Today, U.S. forces remain in Iraq under a bilateral security agreement with the Iraqis helping to provide security and to support the promising freely elected government.

Post-invasion success in Iraq has been dependent on the three approaches of military stability, economic stability and political stability. While tremendous progress was being made on the ground in terms of political stability – with the first ever democratic elections in Iraq – the security situation was not allowing economic growth or political stability to continue, which then continually contributed to a worsening security situation in a vicious cycle.

**Editor's Note:** To learn more about the Republic of Iraq, please visit the [U.S. State Department's profile page](#) or the [CIA World Fact Book](#).

### **Shiite vs. Sunni and the Political Instability of Iraq**

Understanding the instability in Iraq requires an understanding of a division between Islam itself. The modern-day divide in Islam began in the year 632 following the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad died without naming a successor to be the new Muslim Caliph, a spiritual leader and representative of Allah. Muslims split on the issue, with some followers believing that the role should be passed down through Muhammad's bloodline to his cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib. The majority of Muslims, however, believed that Muhammad's friend Abu Bakr should lead. Abu Bakr became Caliph.

What ensued were several years of bloody conflict over the rightful leader of the Islamic faith, ultimately leading to a formal split. Supporters of the now deceased Ali, would eventually be known collectively as Shi'at Ali, or follower of Ali, ultimately "Shiite." The line of succession from Abu Bakr would eventually be known as Sunnis, meaning followers of the Sunnah, or Way of the Prophet.

The divide in Islam continues today, even though both sects share many of the same core beliefs of Islam. There are, however, critical differences. Shiites submit only to the authority of Muhammad and the Twelve Imams, who comprise Ali and certain direct descendants. The Shiites consider the Twelve to be mediators between God and man. Though the Twelfth and last Imam went into hiding in the year 940, Shiites believe that he will reemerge to rule the world as the messianic "Mahdi". Until that time, the Shiite clergy are responsible for interpreting Islam. On the other hand, the Sunnis do not think of their imams as divine intercessors and instead believe they can have a direct relationship with God. Today about 90 percent of Muslims worldwide are Sunnis. Neither sect can accept the other's interpretation of Islam, but due to the greater number of Sunni, Shiites see themselves as the oppressed, and they see Sunnis as the oppressors.

Fast forward to 1979, when Saddam Hussein, a Sunni Muslim, assumed power in Iraq. Until that time, Iraq's Shiites had lived for many years under leaders who allowed them some level of equality with the Sunnis. Saddam, however, fearing a similar uprising to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran in his own country, ordered the murder of Iraq's most popular Shiite religious leader. Shiites were repressed and shut out of most senior government and military positions.

Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, but a U.S.-led coalition acting under U.N. resolutions expelled Iraq in February 1991. After the war, Shiites saw a chance to rebel against the Sunni dictator. Kurdish peoples in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south both rebelled against the dictator partly because they were led to believe that the allied forces would be there to help them. However, the Kurds and the Shiites received no protection from the allied forces as they had expected. Saddam violently quashed the revolt killing more than 300,000 Shiites, by some estimates, many of whom were buried in mass graves. For the rest of his reign, Saddam firmly repressed the Shiites.

After the defeat of the Hussein regime by coalition forces in 2003, Sunni and Shiite relations did not immediately turn violent. In their new found relief from the oppressive rule of Saddam, the religious divisions were not immediately evident. In January 2005, however, with Iraq's first post-Saddam elections approaching, the old divisions reemerged. Sunni parties boycotted the poll, allowing a Shiite coalition to sweep to power. After years of oppression under Saddam, the Shiite-led government made moves to antagonize the Sunnis. For example, the Shiites recruited Shiite militia into the police and the military forces, who then used their new positions to avenge old grudges against Sunnis. Sunni terrorism groups stepped up

their bombing campaigns against the Shiites and coalition forces, which convinced Shiites that the former ruling class was never going to accept its reduced status. By the time the second general elections in Iraq were held in December 2005, the Sunni parties took part, but the two sects were severely divided, exacerbating the violence and security concerns in the country.

The security situation in Iraq was further complicated when Islamic extremists from neighboring countries saw this reigniting as an opportunity to stop U.S. progress towards creating a free and democratic Iraq. When al-Qaeda in Iraq and Iranian fighters seeking to promote instability bombed a sacred mosque, and then subsequently blamed the coalition forces, the situation in Iraq spun into near chaos. Islamic militants entered Iraq in countless numbers, turning Iraq into the front line of the battle against Islamic extremism and the Global War on Terror.

### **Iraqi Self-Governance and Domestic Politics**

During the 2003 to 2011 presence of U.S. forces, Iraq completed a formal political transition from Saddam Hussein's dictatorship to a plural political system in which varying sects and ideological and political factions compete in elections. Since the 2005 elections, there has been a consensus among Iraqi elites to give each community a share of power and prestige to promote cooperation and unity. Still, disputes over the relative claim of each community continue to permeate every issue in Iraq resulting in constant infighting among the major factions.

The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which temporarily administered Iraq after the invasion, transferred full governmental authority in June 2004, to the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG), which in turn yielded to a Transitional National Assembly (TNA), followed by the Iraq Transitional Government (ITG). The Iraqi public approved Iraq's permanent constitution by referendum on Oct. 15, 2005. An election under the constitution for a 275-member Council of Representatives was held on Dec. 15, 2005, and May 20, 2006, marked the transition from the ITG to Iraq's first constitutional government in nearly a half-century.

Parliamentary elections were again held in March 2010, with increased voter turnout from Iraqis taking a greater stake in their nation's democratic future. According to Department of Defense reports, the March 2010 election showed significant progress in terms of political discourse, citing a shift in political campaigns away from sectarian issues instead prioritizing issues such as security, employment, and essential services. These developments are encouraging for the country's long term stability, however it remains to be seen if political leaders will follow through on their promises to focus on national issues and forgo sectarian violence.

But before things got better, they definitely worsened in Iraq. While the 2005 elections were considered successful, they did not resolve all of the Sunni and Shiite issues and violence worsened. Sectarian violence was so serious that by the end of 2006, many were considering the U.S. mission as failing. This is when a troop "surge" was considered and eventually implemented in Iraq.

### **The Surge**

Prior to the 2007 "surge," coalition forces would move into an area – a town or region – and clear out insurgents. Once the area was secured, they would move on and allow Iraqi forces to move in and oversee infrastructure rebuilding. However, this created many problems. Insurgents would simply wait until the coalition forces had left the area, renew their destruction, and gain control of a region again.

In early 2007, a new “surge” strategy was implemented by General David Petraeus to defeat the insurgency. When announced, the surge was a controversial policy. The war had turned unpopular and many Democrats and liberals were calling for the U.S. to simply pull out of Iraq. However, under the surge, not only was the U.S. not pulling out, but was sending in more troops in to a chaotic war zone.

The surge included the deployment of additional troops to Iraq so that they could use overwhelming numbers to clear out areas more quickly, avoiding protracted battles, and to leave a footprint of coalition forces behind to protect the newly freed areas. This was a change in focus for the U.S. military to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, protect the local population and train Iraqi forces to ensure that once left behind they are capable of providing acceptable security. The U.S.-led surge was a remarkable success, and a new Iraq is coming into its own. Democracy and the rule of law are now replacing terrorism, fear, and intimidation as the norm.

The surge demonstrated that the United States is capable of fighting and winning a war against non-traditional threats. Gen. Petraeus is a true hero and a remarkable military commander who defied the odds to deliver results in the face of a brutal, sophisticated and multifaceted enemy.

### **The Withdrawal of U.S. Military Forces**

In November of 2008, after lengthy negotiations with the outgoing Bush Administration, the Iraqi Parliament approved a status of forces agreement (SOFA) with the U.S. Government, which was officially titled, “Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq.” SOFAs are the official treaties we have with countries in which we have U.S. troops that lay out the legal parameters for their deployment there. The agreement established that U.S. combat forces would withdraw from Iraqi cities, villages and localities no later than June 30, 2009, and would require a complete withdrawal of U.S. combat forces no later than December 31, 2011.

In February 2009, President Obama announced his own plan to withdraw troops from Iraq, which accelerated the timeline laid out in the Bush-administration-negotiated SOFA. Under the plan laid out by President Obama, the majority of U.S. combat forces would withdraw by August 2010 (17 months sooner than the original SOFA called for), leaving 50,000 troops in a supporting role until the end of 2011.

In late August 2010, the final U.S. military combat brigade withdrew from Iraq, leaving behind 50,000 support troops as President Obama had called for in his February 2009 plan. While these troops are officially limited to a supporting role, they performed functions similar to a combat brigade, accompanying Iraqi units on combat missions, providing air support to Iraqi ground operations and directly conducting Special Forces operations. On Dec. 18, 2011, the full withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq was completed.

Since the full withdrawal of U.S. troops, there were numerous high-profile suicide and other attacks against Shiite religious pilgrims and neighborhoods throughout Iraq. These attacks, some of which al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQ-I) has taken responsibility for, are seen as an attempt by Sunni insurgents and AQ-I to undermine the Iraqi democratic leadership and to reignite sectarian conflict. But, U.S. officials note that similar attacks occurred while U.S. forces were still in Iraq, so there is some debate over whether violence levels have actually increased since the U.S. pullout or not. Because of these outbreaks of violence, the U.S. attempted diplomatic intervention by sending Vice President Biden, Ambassador James F. Jeffrey and CIA Director Petraeus to Iraq at the end of 2011, which seemed to have calmed the crisis somewhat.

## **Looking Forward**

The United States seeks a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq with a just, representative and accountable government; a state that is neither a safe-haven for, nor sponsor of, terrorism; an Iraq that is integrated into the global economy and is a long-term U.S. partner contributing to regional peace and security.

However, Iraq's political progress is relatively tentative and fragile but continues in the right direction – a direction enhanced by the increasing security. In order to maintain stability, Iraqi political parties must proactively continue to develop a true democracy and an effective government. This includes fostering a peaceful political process and electoral proceedings in order to prevent civil unrest and political violence. Moreover, the parties voted into power must work to defuse lingering ethnic and sectarian tensions, build effective government institutions, deliver services to their constituents and provide hope for a better future. Permanent stability is more than likely not yet attainable, but hopefully the strengthening of democracy and institution-building and a turning of Iraqi official attention toward basic governance and economic issues will continue to push Iraq in that direction.

## IRAQ TALKING POINTS

- We owe our brave men and women in uniform a debt of gratitude for their selfless service to our nation. It is critical that we ensure that they and their families are taken care of and get the care and attention they deserve on the home front.
- The Iraqi people have held successful elections but their progress, as well as ours, is fragile and reversible. We must continue to promote peace in the region to provide the opportunity of a positive, secure future for the young democracy.
- Casualties – <http://www.defendamerica.mil/fallen.html>

## **ANALYSIS OF COSTS & SPENDING FOR IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN**

The exact costs associated with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is difficult to discern since the figure depends on which defense costs are attributed to the war and which are attributed to general defense spending. In this section, the costs of the war will be broken down into its individual components in order to give candidates a better understanding of the exact costs.

According to analysis by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and of this writing, the federal government has appropriated a total of nearly \$1.4 trillion for war-related activities in the Departments of Defense and State, and federal intelligence agencies from 2001 through 2011. This includes a total of \$757 billion for Iraq and \$416 billion for Afghanistan, and \$74.2 billion in war-related aid from the State department and USAID. While these figures take into account all of the direct appropriations made by Congress associated with the war, some have criticized that these figures fail to address the full costs by not acknowledging the indirect costs. Critics assert that once veterans' immediate and long-term medical costs and interest payments on war debt are accounted for that the actual cost is much higher.

According to one analysis by Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies, the total costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (as well as the Global War on Terror) will range between \$3.7 and \$4.4 trillion once long-term health care costs, interest and war-related additions to the DOD base budget are accounted for. While these figures rely on long-term projections and several assumptions that may not come to fruition, they do offer some insight into the potential downstream financial impacts of the wars on the federal budget.

### **Human Costs**

In addition to the financial costs associated with the wars, it is important to acknowledge the human costs associated with the war in terms of U.S., allied, and civilian casualties.

The most up-to-date information on U.S. military casualties in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars can be found at the DOD's website at, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf> and on *Washington Post's* Faces of the Fallen webpage at, <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/national/fallen/>.

At the time of this writing, a total of 6,373 U.S. service members had died in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition to the U.S. military casualties, the following are estimates of the casualties incurred by other groups during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars:

- 2,300 casualties - U.S. Contractors
- 1,192 casualties - Allied Military Personnel
- 3,520 casualties - Pakistani Security Forces
- 18,678 casualties - Iraqi and Afghan Security Forces
- approximately 137,000 casualties - Iraqi and Afghan Civilians