



For immediate release: June 23, 2011

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**New Year, Same War:
Moderate Withdrawal and No Change in Strategy**

Washington, DC- After a decade of American involvement in the Afghanistan war, President Obama is continuing a military campaign that neither protects American lives nor advances American security issues.

“A token withdrawal that leaves nearly 100,000 U.S. troops in place through the end of this year, and tens of thousands of troops in place for years to come, does not meet the President’s order in December 2009 of an accelerated transition of responsibility to Afghan forces, and it certainly doesn’t foreshadow a foreseeable end to the war in Afghanistan,” said Matthew Hoh, Afghanistan Study Group director and senior fellow at the Center for International Policy.

Simply removing the 30,000 “surge” troops from Afghanistan means that by the end of 2012, we will be in the exact same position we were in late 2009. Tens of thousands of American soldiers will continue to fight a war that policymakers now realize and insist can only end with a political solution, not a military solution.

By failing to significantly drawdown the number of troops in Afghanistan, the President will continue to needlessly risk the lives of American soldiers. Over 1,600 American soldiers have been killed and over 11,000 have been wounded in Afghanistan over the last decade. Despite being 18 months into the “surge,” our casualties are in fact increasing.

Experts estimate that there are no more than 100 al Qaeda members remaining in Afghanistan. In other words, for every one al Qaeda member, the U.S. is currently committing 1,000 troops and \$1.2 billion a year. With rising deficits, unfunded domestic needs and a weak economy, the United States simply can no longer afford to spend \$100 billion a year on this war. This reduction in troop strength will only correspond to a minimal reduction in costs to American taxpayers.

Continuing the current strategy for the war in Afghanistan diverts our national security resources from other, more imminent threats, provides a false sense of security and wastes limited American resources.

The Afghanistan Study Group and the Center for International Policy urge a change of strategy in Afghanistan that is commensurate with our actual national interests, to include substantial troop reductions of 30,000 this year and 40,000 in 2012, and sincere and intense political efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and the region.

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