

Five Major Flaws in Trump's Afghanistan Strategy that He Does Not Want You to Know About

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According to his Monday night speech, 45 is [sending 4,000 more US troops to Afghanistan](#), signaling support for the longest-running war in U.S. history. But there are at least five gaping holes in his plan:*

1. Trump's Afghanistan strategy is a betrayal of his 2016 campaign

Back before he was even considering running for president, 45 tweeted on multiple occasions that the war in Afghanistan was a "waste," "nonsense," and "a total disaster." In 2011, 45 tweeted his agreement with then-Congressman Ron Paul's assessment that the U.S. was "wasting lives and money in Afghanistan."

However, according to a New York Times article published Monday night, 45 eventually [submitted to pressure](#) from the multiple generals in his cabinet and administration, who convinced him that the only viable strategy in Afghanistan was to send in thousands more troops. This means the Afghan war is the longest-running war in American history, surpassing the [Moro Rebellion](#) (1899-1913) by four years.

Let's get out of Afghanistan. Our troops are being killed by the Afghanis we train and we waste billions there. Nonsense! Rebuild the USA.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 11, 2013](#)

We should leave Afghanistan immediately. No more wasted lives. If we have to go back in, we go in hard & quick. Rebuild the US first.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 1, 2013](#)

We have wasted an enormous amount of blood and treasure in Afghanistan. Their government has zero appreciation. Let's get out!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [November 21, 2013](#)

Ron Paul is right when he says we are wasting lives and money in Iraq and Afghanistan.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [August 17, 2011](#)

Afghanistan is a total disaster. We don't know what we are doing. They are, in addition to everything else, robbing us blind.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 12, 2012](#)

Now Obama is keeping our soldiers in Afghanistan for at least another year. He is losing two wars simultaneously.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [December 1, 2014](#)

2. More U.S. troops won't "change a damn thing"

Even for those who support the war, it's unclear that the additional 4,000 soldiers is enough to change much. Michael Adams, a former Special Operations Command Sergeant Major with years of experience in Afghanistan, told Grit Post that the troop surge won't be enough to turn the tide in the war-torn region.

"If 4,000 is correct, even if the majority were Special Operations Forces, it isn't going to change a damn thing on the ground in Afghanistan or Pakistan," Adams told Grit Post in an interview. "This has all been done before and we know the result; thousands dead, an economy and an insurgency funded by opium [and] rampant corruption."

After 16 years, the Afghan government controls only 57 percent of the country's districts, according to a [report](#) from SIGAR, the U.S. government's top watchdog organization in Afghanistan. Though the number of U.S. casualties is relatively low, the dirty secret of the war is the astonishing number of Afghans who are dying. The number of civilian casualties has already reached a [record high](#) this year, with at least 1,662 deaths and 3,581 wounded—many resulting from U.S. and Afghan airstrikes.

Moreover, there is a skyrocketing number of [casualties](#) sustained by the Afghan security forces, of which [807](#) were killed in the first six weeks of this year alone, according to SIGAR.

3. Mercenaries could play a big role in the coming surge

The White House has [considered](#) dramatically expanding the role of private contractors in the war. According to Erik Prince, former CEO of Blackwater/Xe/Academi, Trump has been in touch with him about a [proposal](#) in which thousands of US soldiers would be replaced with his private army of military contractors. Prince, the brother-in-law of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, has served as an [advisor](#) for Trump's transition team and even as an [unofficial envoy](#) for the executive branch.

Though Prince boasts about how much leaner and more efficient private contractors are, they often cost taxpayers far more than US troops—sometimes [three times](#) as much. Furthermore, mercenaries like Blackwater contractors are exposed to far less transparency than U.S. soldiers.

4. Trump wants a piece of Afghanistan's mineral wealth

The executive branch has made no secret of its [interest](#) in Afghanistan's mineral deposits, which may amount to more than \$1 trillion in total wealth. Afghanistan's minerals are so bountiful that a [recent report from Reuters](#) claims the country has the potential to become "the Saudi Arabia of lithium." One major problem: the Taliban controls much of the territory in which these minerals rest.

However, a study conducted by Afghanistan's government estimates the nation's mineral wealth is even more vast than previously imagined. A partial survey conducted by the Afghan Ministry of Mines and Petroleum claims the country's mineral wealth is estimated at [\\$3 trillion](#) — more than enough to compensate for the war's cost. Stephen Feinberg, the billionaire financier who owns the military contractor DynCorp International, is informally advising the White House on Afghanistan [according to a report in The New York Times](#), which said the company may potentially play a role in safeguarding American mining operations.

5. An Afghan strategy that ignores Pakistan is doomed to fail

In 2016 alone, the US gave \$550 million in military aid to Pakistan—a country that has been propping up the Taliban for years. In fact, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, quoting an Afghan security forces official, [said in December 2016](#) that if the Taliban didn't have sanctuary in Pakistan, "they would not last a month."

Though Trump's address included vague talk about getting tough on Pakistan, it did not include any specific proposals for how he would do that. It's unlikely that any foreseeable amount of US troops would be able to defeat the Taliban without the support of the Pakistanis.

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(GritPost.com is now exclusively referring to Donald Trump as "45." Please read [our official statement on Twitter](#) explaining the decision.)

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