



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on May 2, 2012

Obama: Afghan Victory Accomplished, But Two Or More Years of War Anyway

President Obama [addressed the nation](#) from Afghanistan May 1, claiming victory over al Qaeda and touting a new agreement with Afghan President Hamid Karzai keeping U.S. troops in combat in the nation for at least two more years. The executive agreement also includes a decade-long commitment of U.S. troops and foreign aid to the nation.



President Obama began the address with a claim that the U.S. had all but defeated al Qaeda in Afghanistan, [claiming](#) “the tide has turned. We broke the Taliban’s momentum. We’ve built strong Afghan security forces. We devastated al Qaeda’s leadership, taking out over 20 of their top 30 leaders.

So, mission accomplished, right? Time for the troops to come home to their families?

Wrong, and wrong again.

Obama still has more war left to fight, [exclaiming](#) “there will be difficult days ahead. The enormous sacrifices of our men and women are not over. But tonight, I’d like to tell you how we will complete our mission and end the war in Afghanistan.”

Telling the nation that the U.S. military is still policing more than half of Afghanistan on a daily basis, Obama [laid out](#) the terms of continued sacrifice of the lives of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan for two more years: “Last year, we removed 10,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan. Another 23,000 will leave by the end of the summer. After that, reductions will continue at a steady pace, with more and more of our troops coming home. And as our coalition agreed, by the end of 2014 the Afghans will be fully responsible for the security of their country.”

But the two-year limit for commitment of U.S. forces is more of a minimum, since the executive agreement Obama signed with Afghan President Hamid Karzai includes a decade of commitments, which include both U.S. troops and foreign aid. “We’re building an enduring partnership,” Obama [said](#). “The agreement we signed today sends a clear message to the Afghan people: As you stand up, you will not stand alone. It establishes the basis for our cooperation over the next decade, including shared commitments to combat terrorism and strengthen democratic institutions.” [According to the Detroit Free Press](#), that may mean keeping as many as 20,000 U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan long after the 2014 deadline. “Officials have previously said as many as 20,000 U.S. troops may remain after the combat mission ends, but that still must be negotiated.” Obama claimed that “we will not build permanent bases in this country” in his address to the nation, but the commitment of U.S. troops to Afghanistan is not limited to the 2014 deadline or any other deadline.

Obama [claims](#) that continued U.S. military presence in Afghanistan is necessary to guard against the virtually non-existent al Qaeda presence in the country from regaining a foothold of control. “Others



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will ask, why don't we leave immediately? That answer is also clear: We must give Afghanistan the opportunity to stabilize. Otherwise, our gains could be lost and al Qaeda could establish itself once more. And as Commander-in-Chief, I refuse to let that happen."

Interestingly, Obama failed to lay out any scenario by which al Qaeda or the Taliban would regain control in Afghanistan. Public evidence of the threat of reconquest of Afghanistan by al Qaeda or its former Taliban allies is non-existent, consigning the threat to the approximate level of the bogeyman. Indeed, al Qaeda as a functional organization has no more capability than a bogeyman, since the organization has been devastated by deaths of all of its top leaders. But, apparently, American servicemen will continue to fight and die in a war of occupation (one which the people of the occupied nation [increasingly resent](#)) that is nominally fought against this bogeyman.

Photo: President Barack Obama delivers a speech from Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, May 2, 2012: AP Images



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