



Written by on October 13, 2009

Obama Sending 13,000 More Troops to Afghanistan

The Washington Post reported on October 13 that the U.S. military is deploying 13,000 additional troops to Afghanistan — in addition to the 21,000 extra combat soldiers approved by President Obama last March.

Pentagon officials said that the latest deployment is made up of support troops, such as engineers, medical personnel, and intelligence experts, and military police, rather than combat troops. However, in military operations such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the enemy is comprised of insurgents waging a guerilla operation, support personnel and civilians can become targets as well.



The deployment of the support troops to Afghanistan brings the total increase in troop strength to 34,000. A report in the British *Guardian* noted that both the White House and Pentagon announced earlier this year that the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan would be raised by 21,000, bringing the total to 68,000 by the end of the year.

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai, speaking to ABC's Good Morning America on October 13, expressed support for U.S. General Stanley McChrystal's request for an extra 40,000 troops, saying: "I'm fully behind him for what he's seeking in this report."

The *Guardian* quoted a U.S. military planner's statement to the *Army Times*: "We've increased forces in Afghanistan before we've reduced forces in Iraq in a meaningful way. If they want forces sooner than 2010, there are no additional forces available. You'll have to pull them from Iraq and put them in Afghanistan."

A similar opinion was expressed by Michael E. O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, who was quoted by the *Washington Post*: "There are admittedly some challenges over the next 10 to 12 months as we are downsizing in Iraq, and therefore any schedule for increasing in Afghanistan might have to be more gradual."

"How many troops are enough for Afghanistan strategy?" — a CNN report posted on October 13 — explored the question presented in its title, noting:

Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, is calling for a counterinsurgency strategy that would add as many as 40,000 troops.

But others in the administration want a different approach.

Vice President Joe Biden has called for a counterterrorism strategy, which would focus on using special forces and technology to reduce the number of al Qaeda insurgents on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

The report then went on to cite an "expert" who said compliance with McChrystal's request is



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necessary to reduce violence throughout Afghanistan and that sending 40,000 more troops would allow the U.S. military to “reverse the momentum of the insurgency, which has been on the rise.” The quote was the Institute for the Study of War’s Kimberly Kagan, who has advised McChrystal on Afghanistan.

That number, Kagan said, would help fill in gaps around Kandahar in the southern part of the country where Taliban forces have amassed. But she warned that, eventually, troops would also be needed to tamp down the insurgency in other parts of the country. “If we had 40,000 more troops, it is likely that the initiative would be wrested from the enemy, and the U.S. and coalition forces would be able to mount a counteroffensive that would proceed in stages over time,” CNN quoted Kagan.

An interesting common association among Dr. Kagan and the general and other prime movers is indicative — in this writer’s opinion — of the clubbish network that persists among those planning, advising about, and executing our wars in the Middle East.

Kagan, who earned her Ph.D in ancient history, and who heads the Institute for the Study of War, previously has taught at West Point, Yale, Georgetown, and the American University. In an essay in *Foreign Policy* magazine for August 10 entitled “Why the Taliban Are Winning — for Now,” Kagan asserted:

McChrystal might adopt a different campaign design — perhaps requiring additional military resources — when he submits his formal assessment to the U.S. secretary of defense and NATO secretary-general sometime after the Afghan elections.

The fact that we have not been doing the right things for the past few years in Afghanistan is actually good news at this moment. A sound, properly resourced counterinsurgency has not failed in Afghanistan; it has never even been tried. So there is good reason to think that such a new strategy can succeed now. But we have to hurry, for as is often the case in these kinds of war, if you aren’t winning, you’re losing.

Dr. Kagan was, of course, part of McChrystal’s formal strategic assessment team, whose input served as the basis for the general’s well-known request for additional troops.

But if Kagan seems to be well-connected with America’s foreign policy establishment, her credentials are nothing in comparison to her husband, Frederick W. Kagan. The male Dr. Kagan (who received his Ph.D in Russian and Soviet military history from Yale) was an American resident scholar at the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute (with which he shares an affiliation with prominent neocons such as William Kristol) and was also a professor at West Point. Frederick along with his brother, Robert (who is a member of the Aspen Strategy Group), and their father Donald are all signatories to the Project for the New American Century (cofounded by Robert Kagan and William Kristol) manifesto entitled *Rebuilding America’s Defenses*.

Frederick Kagan and his father David Kagan (a Yale professor and a fellow at the Hudson Institute) coauthored *While America Sleeps: Self-Delusion, Military Weakness, and the Threat to Peace Today*, in which they argued in favor of a large increase in military spending and warned of future threats, including the now-discredited claim of a threat from Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction program.

Robert Kagan is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and is married to Victoria Nuland, the former U.S. ambassador to NATO, who has twice been a visiting fellow at the CFR.

Back to Dr. Kimberly Kagan, who, along with husband Frederick, was part of the strategic assessment team sent by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates last July to meet with McChrystal and advise the



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commander about improving U.S. military strategy. As we noted in our July 31 article, "[Advisers Call for Afghanistan Troop Buildup](#)," other members of the team included Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), who was once a national security assistant to Senator John McCain on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Stephen Biddle, a military analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington. We noted that the CSIS has been described by some as "a CFR front group" because of the connections of some of its more prominent members to the CFR.

Likewise, Senator McCain, Defense Secretary Gates, and General McChrystal are all CFR members.

Lest we belabor a point, however, the CFR is by no means the only "think tank" (as such elite policy groups generally like to be labelled) exerting disproportionate influence on our government's foreign policy. Though we often describe the CFR as "internationalist" in its philosophical bent, the association of organizations to which members of the extended Kagan family are affiliated include several that are "neoconservative" (neoccon) in orientation. (For a brief introduction to neoconservatism, read "[The Passing of Irving Kristol](#).")

As we noted previously, William Kristol (Irving's son) collaborated with Dr. Frederick Kagan (husband of Dr. Kimberly Kagan) in cofounding the neocon Project for the New American Century.

While these interconnected affiliations may be a bit much to absorb in a single sitting, those who would understand the dynamics behind the never-ending succession of wars in which our military has been entangled since (and including) World War II should make a serious effort to follow the trails. Not to do so, is to remain vulnerable to the next propaganda barrage purporting to show why we *must* send military forces to one backwater satrapy or another — "for our national security."

Photo of Gen. Stanley McChrystal: AP Images



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