



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on November 17, 2020

Pentagon Expects Trump Order to Draw Down Troops in Afghanistan

The Defense Department is anticipating an order from President Trump very soon instructing the military to reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan from 4,500 to 2,500 and the number of forces in Iraq from 3,000 to 2,500 by January 15.

While significant, these numbers still fall short of fulfilling one of Trump's goals expressed in an October 7 tweet: "we should have the small remaining number of our BRAVE Men and Women serving in Afghanistan home by Christmas!"

The troop reduction is seen as an implementation of policy changes following Trump's November 9 replacement of Defense Secretary Mark Esper with Christopher Miller as acting DOD secretary. Miller has served as director of the National Counterterrorism Center since August.

Esper — a member of the pro-interventionist Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) — sent a classified memo recently to the White House asserting that it was the unanimous recommendation of those in the chain of command that the United States should not reduce its troop presence in Afghanistan until certain conditions were met. In the past, U.S. military officials have said that the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan should be tied to the Taliban breaking its ties to al Qaeda and making progress in peace talks with the Afghan government.

That memo is believed to have been a key factor in Trump's removal of Esper.

A CNN report stated that despite slow progress in removing all troops from Afghanistan, the Trump administration has already reduced U.S. troops in the country by more than 50 percent, recently bringing the number down to about 4,500. A BBC report noted that in September, the Pentagon announced it would withdraw more than a third of its troops from Iraq — from about 5,200 to 3,000.

Some non-interventionists who have been critical of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, such as former Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas), approved of Trump's October 7 tweet predicting that we should have the remaining number of men and women serving in Afghanistan home by Christmas. Paul nevertheless expressed some skepticism concerning whether or not this troop withdrawal would take place:

While President Trump's statement on bringing the troops home is to be applauded, he has a real problem getting his policies implemented by the very people he has hired to do the implementing. It has long been said that "the personnel is the policy," and we have seen this



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very clearly in this administration.

Paul continued:

For a president once made famous for uttering the line “you’re fired,” Trump seems unwilling or perhaps unable to dismiss those who actively seek to undermine his policies.

It appears that by firing Esper and replacing him with Miller, Trump did exactly what Paul had proposed — thereby continuing to proceed with the troop drawdown.

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