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U.S. Launches Offensive Against Taliban

A joint U.S.-Afghan military assault began against Dahaneh, a Taliban stronghold in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province on August 12. Associated Press journalists traveling with the forces reported that militants fired small arms, mortars, and rocket-propelled grenades after helicopters dropped the troops over Taliban lines. The forces were supported by British-made Harrier jets, which are used by both the British military and U.S. Marines.



The Marine Expeditionary Brigade reported that 400 Marines and sailors and 100 Afghan soldiers took part in the offensive, named "Operation Eastern Resolve 2."

In Kabul, Canadian Brigadier General Eric Tremblay of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force said that Afghan and foreign troops will be operating across the country to provide security for the first presidential election in five years. "So our focus remains on preparing the way for the elections by confronting the insurgents, denying them the freedom to operate, isolating them from the population and degrading their capability," said Tremblay.

AP cited a Marine-corps statement that U.S.-led forces killed between seven and 10 militants during the assault and seized about 66 pounds of opium, which the militants use to finance their insurgency. "I think this has the potential to be a watershed," said Capt. Zachary Martin, commander of Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines, who led the assault.

A Marine spokesman said that the Marines, by occupying Dahaneh, hope to isolate insurgents and keep them in wooded and mountainous areas, away from civilian centers.

AFP quoted Brigadier General Larry Nicholson, commander of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade in Afghanistan, who said in a statement from Camp Leatherneck, in central Helmand, that the aim of the mission in Naw Zad district was to prevent Taliban fighters from acting on threats to disrupt presidential and provincial council elections next week. "Our mission is to support the Independent Election Commission and Afghan national security forces. They are the ones in charge of these elections. Our job is to make sure they have the security to do their job," Nicholson said. He added: "While we encourage every Afghan to exercise his right to vote, who he or she votes for is none of our business."

Afghan Defense ministry spokesman General Mohammad Azimi told reporters that nine districts remained under Taliban control: four in Helmand, two in Kandahar province, one in Uruzgan province, and two in a region he did not name.

Azimi said troops were being deployed nationwide to provide security on election day. The nation's election officials have said that 300,000 Afghan and foreign forces will stand guard at polling booths. "Our troops are in the process of being placed at polling stations as part of efforts to provide security



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for the elections. We are still hoping that more areas will be cleared before election day," said Azimi. Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman told reporters that the operation was "going as planned," adding: "[U.S. and Afghan forces] are engaged in a fight. They are meeting some resistance."

For as long as the United States has existed, whenever a difficult military challenge has presented itself, our commanders have responded with a call to "send in the Marines." The reason for this confidence is well founded. Because of the Marine Corps' tough-as-nails training, exceptional pride in its mission and each other, and a long-standing tradition of getting the job done, more often than not U.S. Marine will overcome all obstacles and defeat the enemy. It is therefore not worthy of these patriots to betray their heroism by using them in a manner contrary to the oath they have sworn: "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

Who is an enemy of the U.S. Constitution? Historically, any foreign power that attacked our nation, from the time the British burned Washington, D.C, to the time Japanese forces invaded Pearl Harbor. The United States has formally declared war against foreign nations only five times (the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II). Each time, the president followed the requirements of Article One, Section Eight of the Constitution, which says "Congress shall have power to ... declare War," by asking Congress for such a declaration.

There has never been a declaration of war authorizing our current military operations in Afghanistan (as with the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq). Instead, the mission (initially called "Operation Enduring Freedom") was "authorized" in 2001 by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1378. UNSCR 1368 called on UN member states to "work together urgently to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers, and sponsors of these attacks" and expressed "readiness to take all necessary steps to respond to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations."

Secretary of State Colin Powell correctly maintained that the United States did not need UN approval to defend itself, but provided an incorrect reason: "that authority ... is based on Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, which gives member states the right to self-defense." Wrong answer. Our federal government has the right to defend our citizens because "We the people of the United States" established our Constitution to, among other things, "provide for the common defense." It is a right enjoyed by all sovereign states.

There is no doubt that the the United States had every right to respond to the 9/11 terror attacks. But if that response required going to war against Afghanistan, then it was the responsibility of President George W. Bush to ask Congress for a declaration of war against the Taliban-controlled government of Afghanistan, possibly listing al-Qaeda as an allied co-combatant of the Taliban. If our military had been provided with adequate resources and a free hand to wage this war, then Taliban and al-Qaeda would today be as extinct as the Hirohito government of Japan and the German Nazi Party.

While a properly declared war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda might have been construed as defending the United States (and its Constitution) against foreign enemies, sending U.S. troops to secure Afghanistan in preparation for its upcoming election hardly passes constitutional muster.

As constitutionalist U.S. Rep. Ron Paul noted in his May 21, 2002 speech before the House, ["Don't Force Taxpayers to Fund Nation-Building in Afghanistan"](#):

Though many will also attempt to claim that this bill is somehow about the attacks of 9/11, let's not fool ourselves: nation-building and social engineering are what this bill is about. Most of the



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problems it seeks to address predate the 9/11 attacks and those it purports to assist had nothing to do with those attacks.... I am terribly concerned that we will spend a lot of money, we will become deeply mired in Afghanistan, and we will not do a lot better than the Soviets did. Now, that is a real possibility that we should not ignore.

The United States would do far better to follow the Swiss example: maintain the best and most modern military possible, while minding our own business regarding the rest of the world. That formula has brought the Swiss over 200 years of peace.

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