





Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 16, 2020

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One might reasonably expect more than has been achieved over nearly two decades at the cost of more than \$132 billion — more than the United States spent rebuilding Europe after World War II, even after adjusting for inflation — and over 2,300 American (and [tens of thousands](#) of Afghan) lives.

According to Sopko, however, the United States has made little progress. In his congressional testimony, he gave America a “D-minus” grade for its efforts. “You showed up for class, that’s it,” he said.

Part of the problem, he argued, is that the United States has tried to impose its own ways on Afghanistan, such as building courthouses and appointing judges to dispense justice. But the judges often fail to appear out of fear, and people have to pay bribes to get anything done.

“As much as you hate the Taliban, and I do,” he said, “to the average Afghan it’s better than the justice provided by the national unity government.”

The Afghan military and police, meanwhile, have been a “hopeless nightmare and a disaster,” he declared. Washington has sent servicemembers, not peace officers, to train police. The military, below the officer level, is a hotbed of corruption.

“You have a lot of corruption, a lot of incompetency and it’s seriously hurting the Afghan military,” he said. “The biggest problem is not casualties; it’s desertions. It’s people disappearing or it’s people who never existed and we’re paying their salaries.”

“Overall,” reported [Fox News](#), “it was a grim picture that Sopko painted, leading Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va. to suggest there were ‘shades of Vietnam.’ Sopko replied, ‘True.’”

The solution, as with Vietnam, is to bring the troops home and let the native population sort out its own problems, something President Donald Trump suggested he would do when running for office but has thus far failed to accomplish. Otherwise, America will continue to waste dollars and lives on an unconstitutional, unwinnable, and unending occupation of the “Graveyard of Empires,” and Afghans will continue to suffer under it.

*Michael Tennant is a freelance writer and regular contributor to The New American.*



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