



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 21, 2012

N.C. Rep. Walter Jones: “Uncle Chang” Funding \$10B-a-Month War in Afghanistan

Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C., left) asked Tuesday when Congress might hear that it's time for Americans to come home from the war “Uncle Chang” is funding in Afghanistan. “As we’re spending \$10 billion a month that we can’t even pay for, the Chinese, Uncle Chang is lending us the money to pay that we’re spending in Afghanistan,” Jones observed during his questioning of Lieutenant General John Allen in a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee. “What is the metric?” Jones asked. “When does the Congress have the testimony that someone will say, we have done all we can do? Bin Laden is dead. There are hundreds of tribes in Afghanistan and everyone has their own mission.” Allen, the Marine who commands the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan, had no ready answer.



“I wish I could tell you that this war was simple and that progress could easily be measured, but that’s not the way of counterinsurgencies,” he said. “They are fraught with both successes and setbacks which can exist in the same space and in the same time. But each must be seen in the larger context of the overall campaign. And I believe the campaign is on track.”

The track has been obstructed of late with riots over the burning of Korans by U.S. forces, video of Marines urinating on the bodies of dead insurgents, and the recent massacre of 16 civilians, allegedly by at least one U.S. soldier, in Kandahar Province. Afghan President Hamid Karzai has called for U.S. forces to withdraw to the perimeter of their bases, but Gen. Allen said Tuesday that the combat mission remains on track for American and NATO troops through the end of 2014. For the mission to succeed, it’s essential that Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are prepared to defend the country before the international combat role ends, the general said.

“It’s my obligation, it’s my moral obligation to ensure that this force is resourced and that this force is committed into a strategy that I think will work,” Allen said. “And I believe this strategy will work. This campaign very clearly envisages that the ANSF will move to the front, the ANSF will have the lead, the ANSF will secure the population of Afghanistan.”

“And if I think that’s coming off the rails, Congressman, I will let you know that,” he told Rep. Jones.

Obama administration officials have said all along that the plan calls for some U.S. forces to remain beyond 2014 to continue training and providing support for the Afghan forces. Both in Congress and in public opinion polls, support for the mission in Afghanistan appears to be wearing thin. About 54



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percent of Americans favor a U.S. withdrawal even if the Afghan Army has not been adequately trained, according to a recent [Washington Post/ABC News poll](#). Over the past decade Republicans have been even more supportive than Democrats of both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, but even some hawkish Republicans appear to have lost their zeal for trying to transform Afghanistan into a part of what former President George W. Bush called a “global democratic revolution.”

“There is a growing voice in the Republican Party that it’s time to get out and go home,” GOP strategist Chip Saltsman said in a recent video segment posted on the Fox News website. Among Republican presidential candidates, only Rep. Ron Paul of Texas has consistently favored a speedy withdrawal from Afghanistan, arguing that what began as a military reprisal against al Qaeda for the 9/11 attacks has expanded into a seemingly endless nation-building project. But lately even the once hawkish Newt Gingrich has conceded that the United States is now in a no-win situation in a land known as the “graveyard of empires.”

“I think it’s very likely that we have lost, tragically lost, the lives and suffered injuries to a considerable number of young Americans on a mission that we’re going to discover is not doable,” Gingrich said in a March 11 interview on *Fox News Sunday*. On CBS’s *Face The Nation*, Gingrich said bringing about the kind of change the United States and its allies are seeking in Afghanistan would require a more “ruthless” approach. “We’re not prepared to be ruthless enough to force them to change, yet we’re clearly an alien presence,” the former Speaker of the House said.

Jones, once one of the most conspicuous supporters of the war in Iraq, was among the House members so incensed in 2003 over France’s opposition to the war that he was one of the proponents of relabeling French fries “Freedom fries” on the menu in the House cafeteria. He later became an opponent of the war, claiming the Bush administration had misled Congress on the reasons for it, most notably concerning Iraq’s alleged “weapons of mass destruction.” He publicly called on President Bush to apologize to Congress for misinformation that led to the Authorization for the Use of Military Force in Iraq, approved overwhelmingly in October 2002. “If I had known that what I know today, I never would have voted for that resolution,” [Jones](#) said in 2005.

Concerning the mission in Afghanistan, [Jones said at Tuesday’s hearing](#), “I hope that sometime in between now and 2014, if things are not improving or they are fragile like they are now, somebody will come to the Congress and say the military has sacrificed enough. The American people have paid enough. And somebody would shoot straight with the American people and the Congress.”

Yet Jones makes it sound as though Congress, the branch of government with authority under our Constitution for deciding issues of war and peace, is helpless when it comes to ending our military role in Afghanistan and must wait for the generals to tell the representatives when it’s permissible to bring the troops home. Congress can force the President’s hand by flatly refusing to fund operations in Afghanistan beyond the point where Congress believes our continued military presence there serves the national interest. As Rep. Jones describes, we are already at, if not beyond, that point.

“We can declare victory now,” the North Carolina Republican said. “But there’s one thing we cannot do, and that is change history, because Afghanistan has never changed since they’ve been existing.”



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