



Obama Proposes Supplementing Afghan/Iraq Soldiers With Social Workers

President Obama renewed his call for a “Civilian Expeditionary Workforce” to supplement the efforts of soldiers in U.S. war-zones in Iraq and Afghanistan in a June 30, 2010 town meeting in Racine, Wisconsin. “So the military goes in there, they clear out everything, they’re making everything secure — and now the question is, all right, can we get the civilians to come in to work with the local governments to improve the situation. And a lot of times, that civilian side of it has been under-resourced.”



More specifically, President Obama [told](#) the “town meeting”:

When you look at a place like Afghanistan, or you look at a place like Iraq, so many of our military personnel are having to engage in work that really should be civilian work — helping to build schools, helping to build bridges, helping to set up rule of law and courts, helping — agricultural specialists to help people learn how to irrigate their fields so that they can grow more food. And the problem is, is that we don’t have a civilian effort that has always matched up to the military efforts.... So what I’m trying to say is, don’t put all the burden on the military. Make sure that we’ve got a civilian expeditionary force that when we go out into some village somewhere and the military makes it secure, let’s have that agricultural specialist right there. Let’s have that person who knows how to train a police force right there. Let’s have all those personnel and let’s make sure that we are giving them the support that they need in order for us to be successful on our mission.

Revitalizing civilian government service has been a cornerstone of the Obama administration since his days as a presidential candidate. Obama [spoke on the issue of national service two years ago](#) as a presidential candidate, but didn’t stress using civilian service in the form of an “expeditionary force” as a supplement to the U.S. military until after becoming President and presiding over the Department of Defense [directive creating a “Civilian Expeditionary Workforce”](#) to supplement military efforts.

President Obama downplayed the “Civilian Expeditionary Workforce” program as simply a case of foreign aid on steroids, [claiming](#) that it was a necessary part of any war effort:

And that means that — by the way, the State Department, our diplomatic arms, we’ve got to give them more support. A lot of times — we really support our military, but I’ll be honest with you, when you go up to Congress and you start talking to them about the budget for training our diplomats and training our development specialists and all that, then people want to cut their budget because they think, well, that’s just foreign aid, that’s not — we don’t want to spend our money on that.

But the problem is, is that if you shortchange that, you may end up having to send our troops in to



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 5, 2010

a very dangerous situation because a country has collapsed. We didn't do the good diplomatic work and it's too late, and now the only solution is a military solution that might cost us five times as much. So we've just got to be smart about using all the elements of American power, not just one element on American power. All right?

Of course, underlying Obama's statement is the false assumption that the prosperity and stability of every country in the world is the responsibility of the U.S. government (and by extension, the U.S. taxpayer). If the United States is attacked by a foreign country and needs to defend itself militarily in a war, most Americans would believe there is no such responsibility to restore that nation's prosperity and stability with a constant stream of foreign aid.

The other question is, will President Obama "fulfill" his promise to remove "combat" troops from Iraq but still increase the U.S. commitment and exposure to the nation, by replacing soldiers with a new army of foreign aid social workers and nominally private security workers?

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