
From the Congress

Reps: No More U.S. Troops to Afghanistan

Sept. 25—U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), joined by 57 bipartisan colleagues, sent a letter to President Obama today urging him “to reject any recommendation to increase the number of combat troops [in Afghanistan], particularly in the absence of a well-defined military exit strategy.”

Representative McGovern is the original sponsor of H.R. 2402, which calls on the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress on an exit strategy for our military operations in Afghanistan.

“We support your administration’s declared goals of defeating Al Qaeda and reducing the global terrorist threat,” the letter continues. “But, we believe that adding even more U.S. troops to the military escalation that your administration ordered in March would be counterproductive.”

The letter reads, in full:

Dear Mr. President,

As you consider the latest assessment of U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan by General Stanley A. McChrystal, we urge you to reject any recommendation to increase the number of combat troops there, particularly in the absence of a well-defined military exit strategy.

We have enormous confidence in the ability of the U.S. military, but we question the effectiveness of committing our troops to a prolonged counterinsurgency war that could last ten years or more, involve hundreds of thousands of troops, and impose huge financial costs on taxpayers already saddled with trillions of dollars of government debt.

According to General Charles Krulak (retired), the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, the current strategy of protecting the people of Afghanistan with U.S. forces would require an escalation of several hundred thousand additional troops. He warns that our military has already been overburdened: “Not only are our troops being run ragged but, equally important and to-

tally off most people’s radar screens, our equipment is being run ragged.” It is unlikely that our NATO allies will be able to sustain the political support necessary for continuing such a mission placing even more of a burden on American forces and the American people.

2009 is already the deadliest year for U.S. forces since the war began eight years ago. Fifty-one of the seven hundred and thirty-eight U.S. soldiers who have lost their lives in Afghanistan were killed last month alone.

The national Afghanistan election that U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry hoped would lead to a “renewal of trust of the Afghan people for their government” was a disaster and will almost certainly have the opposite effect. The official Electoral Complaints Commission in Afghanistan has announced that it has found “clear and convincing evidence of fraud.” A government already mired in allegations of widespread fraud and incompetence is now facing serious charges and compelling evidence that it has attempted to steal the national election.

A February 2009 ABC/BBC/ARD poll found that only 18 percent of Afghans support increasing the number of U.S. troops in their country. This should come as no surprise. Historically, Afghans have always forcefully resisted the presence of foreign military forces, be they British, Soviet or American. The presence of our forces strengthens the hand of Taliban recruiters. Indeed, an independent analysis early this year by the Carnegie Institute concluded that the presence of



U.S. Army/Sgt. David Alvarado

Fifty-eight Members of Congress have so far signed a letter to President Obama, saying, in effect, that Gen. Stanley McChrystal is wrong. McChrystal, seen here with Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta in August, says that without more troops, the U.S. mission in Afghanistan will fail. The Representatives argue that it would be a mistake to send more troops into the “quagmire.”

foreign troops is probably the single most important factor in the resurgence of the Taliban.

We support your administration's declared goals of defeating Al Qaeda and reducing the global terrorist threat. But, we believe that adding even more troops to the military escalation that your administration ordered in March would be counterproductive. We urge you to consider and pursue the full range of alternative options including applying the lessons of the Cold War where we isolate and contain those who pose a threat to our national security.

Mr. President, the last thing that our nation needs as it struggles with the pain of a severe economic crisis and a mountain of debt is another military quagmire. We believe this is why recent polls consistently show that a majority of Americans are opposed to a military escalation in Afghanistan. We urge you to reject any recommendation for a further escalation of U.S. military forces there.

Sincerely,

Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.), James McGovern (D-Mass.), Jim McDermott (D-Wash), Ron Paul (R-Tex.), Neil Abercrombie (D-Hi.), Ed Whitfield (R-Ky.), Bruce Braley (D-Ia.), Tim Johnson (R-Ill.), Pete Stark (D-Calif.), Phil Hare (D-Ill.), Lloyd Doggett (D-Tex.), Ben Lujan (D-N.M.), Raúl Grijalva (D-Tex.), Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.), Lloyd Doggett (D-Tex.), Bob Filner (D-Calif.), John Olver (D-Mass.), José Serrano (D-N.Y.), Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), Jerry Costello (D-Ill.), Alan Grayson (D-Fla.), Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.), Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.), Ed Pastor (D-Ariz.), Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Tex.), John Lewis (D-Ga.), Carolyn B. Maloney (D-N.Y.), Richard Neal (D-Mass.), Diane Watson (D-Calif.), John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), Dennis Kucinich (D-Oh.), Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.), Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), Donna Edwards (D-Md.), Laura Richardson (D-Calif.), Michael Honda (D-Calif.), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), Daniel Maffei (D-N.Y.), Steve Kagen (D-Wisc.), Michael Capuano (D-Mass.), Sam Farr (D-Calif.), Chellie Pingree (D-Me.), Luis Gutiérrez (D-Ill.), Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y.), Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), Mazie Hirono (D-Hi.), Jared Polis (D-Colo.), Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.), John J. Duncan, Jr. (R-Tenn.), Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.), Mike Michaud (D-Me.), Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), Rush Holt (D-N.J.), Mike Quigley (D-Ill.), Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.).