



US Retreats From Afghanistan: Truth Behind The Empire's Defeat

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Abby Martin (AM): President Biden has made the major announcement that he's officially ending the Afghanistan war and is expected to withdraw the remaining 3500 U.S. military personnel from Afghanistan with 7000 NATO soldiers following suit.

President Biden: I believe that our presence in Afghanistan should be focused on the reason we went in the first place: To ensure Afghanistan would not be used as a base from which to attack our homeland again. We did that. We accomplish that objective.

AM: Pretty bold statement coming from Biden, considering the U.S. has completely failed the main objective they've been telling us for two decades that justified the endless fighting in Afghanistan and driving the Taliban from power. The deadline Biden gave for the full withdrawal is the 20 year anniversary of 9/11, the same event the U.S. empire used to justify its criminal invasion and subsequent 20 year occupation of the country. This seems like political theater for the White House to celebrate its great fake victory. But funny enough, retreating on 9/11 seems like much more of a propaganda victory for the resistance in Afghanistan.

After 20 long years, it's pretty hard to believe this is really coming to an end, especially given the empty rhetoric and unfulfilled promises from every administration, including Biden himself, when he was serving as vice president. So after decades of endless war, trillions of dollars spent and thousands of lives lost. Why now? And is the U.S. empire really letting go of Afghanistan. Well before you start celebrating, there are several major things being missed from the coverage about the reality of the withdrawal.

First, what's being framed by Biden as finally ending the Afghanistan war is actually his announcement to extend the war. See, the U.S. withdrawal deadline was set for May 1st. That's not some arbitrary date. That's the negotiated peace deal with the Taliban, which the U.S. had been working to get in some form for almost a decade. Biden could have easily stuck to this plan and ordered all troops out by May 1st. But extending it over four months for seemingly no reason at all other than theatrics opens the door to disaster. And the Taliban is pissed. They previously threatened a mass casualty event for U.S. troops if they remained past May 1st, and they're boycotting an upcoming peace conference as a result. In fact, the

Pentagon says it's actually sending more troops to Afghanistan to help the withdrawal, meaning they likely expect some kind of attack. What's more worrisome, it creates an opportunity to re-escalate the war by using the remaining soldiers as bait. Then the U.S. can claim the Taliban broke the deal, not the U.S. This massive risk could be a bait and switch by the White House, but more likely, it's just reckless stupidity for some weird 9/11 performance.

Second, Biden's use of mission accomplished as framing the withdrawal as a victory. But the truth is that the U.S. has been handily defeated in Afghanistan and is finally finishing its multi-year retreat after being forced out. Bush's main goal during the invasion was to oust the Taliban because they allegedly harbored terrorists. This was seamlessly echoed by Obama, who argued the Taliban were far too dangerous to allow any power in Afghanistan.

President Bush: Thanks to our military and our allies and the brave fighters of Afghanistan, the Taliban regime is coming to an end. The United States respects the people of Afghanistan, but we condemn the Taliban regime. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, where they will share in their fate.

President Obama: And if the Afghan government falls to the Taliban or allows Al-Qaeda to go unchallenged, that country will again be a base for terrorists who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government.

AM: Today, the Taliban controls way more territory than they did in 2001. And the White House has openly acknowledged that they expect the Taliban to take full control of the government after the U.S. withdrawal. It's important to review the evolution of this war, to understand just how absurd the whole thing really is. In the first phase, the U.S. thought it could easily oust the Taliban and install 100 percent puppet government. Once Obama came in that morphed into pursuing a unity government to share power 50-50 with the Taliban, all while lying to the public about needing to defeat them. Then Trump stepped in, thought bombing the shit out of the country leading to record deaths could accomplish this power sharing dream. Now, Washington has totally given up on all of that and fully accepts a likely total Taliban takeover. To recap, what started as a regime change operation 20 years ago has ended with the Taliban regime more powerful than ever before.

So now let's get to the big end. Is the U.S. really leaving at all?

President Biden: But we will not take our eye off the terrorist threat. We'll reorganize our counterterrorism capabilities and the substantial assets in the region to prevent reemergence of terrorist threat to our homeland from over the horizon. We will hold the Taliban accountable for its commitment not to allow any terrorist to threaten the United States or its allies from Afghan soil. And we'll focus our full attention on the threat we face today. In my direction, my team is refining our national strategy to monitor and disrupt significant terrorist

threats not only in Afghanistan, but anywhere they may arise in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere.

AM: That pretty much sums it up. The U.S. is retreating from Afghanistan, but continuing the larger war on terror. Afghanistan will just be folded in with all of these other countries where the U.S. wages war without a big traditional military occupation. Here's what we know so far. As of now, the U.S. is actually removing all of its conventional forces and closing its bases. Shocking. I know. The U.S. never wanted that to happen. Yes, the war is very profitable for defense contractors and the empire really wanted a stable puppet regime in military garrison. But just like in Iraq, a totally lost quagmire at the hands of an underdog insurgency is actually pretty damaging for the optics of this invincible empire. And even Secretary of State Blinken admitted that investing so much in an unwinnable war hurts America's larger goal to confront and fight China. So as you probably guessed, while the war will basically be over for the U.S., it won't be over for Afghanistan. According to The New York Times, the Pentagon plans to use a, quote, "less visible but still potent force, utilizing attack planes aboard aircraft carriers and long range bombers flying from land bases across the Persian Gulf." It also explains how removing troops doesn't mean they're coming home. Instead, they will be repositioned to neighboring countries of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to launch cross-border operations. Additionally, CIA strike teams and special forces are expected to continue operating in the country as part of America's global black ops. Also, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin just revealed that the U.S. would continue paying the salaries of its Afghan proxy forces, meaning the U.S. could be funding a civil war in the country well after they leave. And finally, nothing has yet been said about the 18,000 private contractors still in Afghanistan. But for pretty much all added by Trump. Many have speculated the occupation is now simply privatized. But only about 1500⁺ of those are armed mercenaries. The rest provided mostly logistical support for the remaining U.S. and NATO combat troops. Could that small number of mercenaries really survive in Taliban country without major U.S. NATO bases and support? While nothing has been announced publicly, an inside source confirmed to us that contractors also just got the orders to clear out ahead of the U.S. withdrawal. Kicked out alongside the U.S.

What this all means is that Washington will still wield its weapons of mass murder on the country, carrying out bombings and assassinations when it wants to like it does in so many other countries, just without the PR disaster being bogged down with boots on the ground. That was the unspoken language in Biden's speech about the war on terror. All of this aside, though, it is hard to wrap your mind around the notion that the U.S. would abandon such a valuable prize for the imperialist war machine. Trillions in mineral wealth, black up opium, and the key geostrategic military positioning near China. But American corporations can't get the mineral wealth in a country where the U.S. is under constant attack. Likewise, what good are U.S. bases to surround China if they're constantly bombarded by heavy resistance? The reality is that the U.S. empire has been retreating from Afghanistan in slow motion now for about a decade. If the Taliban government doesn't want to cooperate, they'll treat them like

any other enemy state, sanctioning and bombing them to exert pressure. But if the Taliban does want to cooperate, the U.S. government will be happy to go back to its old policy of treating the Taliban like friends and allies.

Twenty years of blood and treasure thrown away under the singular mission of taking power from the Taliban, and now here we are with a defeated empire, extending a hand to their former mortal enemies. Wasn't a total waste, though. A lot of defense contractors made a killing these past two decades. But for the U.S. empire, the mission was a complete and total failure. They didn't get the mineral wealth, they didn't get their puppet regime, and they didn't get their permanent home for major U.S. bases. And an unfathomable number of lives and limbs were sacrificed for a hopeless endeavor. 3500 U.S. and allied forces have been killed. But far more devastating, official numbers are 150,000 Afghan civilians killed. But that's a gross underestimate, according to Fiona Frazer, the UN's human rights chief in Afghanistan, "more civilians are killed or injured in Afghanistan due to armed conflict than anywhere else on Earth." The published figures almost certainly do not reflect the true scale of harm. This means the true death toll is probably many, many more times higher than what we know today. The war has completely destroyed the country infrastructurally, environmentally, socially and politically, leading to the second largest refugee population in the world. Today, 70 percent of Afghans subsist on just a dollar a day. A terrible toll for which the U.S. owes heavy reparations and U.S. politicians who lied to continue the war, including Biden and his predecessors, should face criminal charges. And as long as the U.S. is criminally meddling in Afghanistan, funding proxy fighters carrying out drone strikes, night raids, trying to influence the government and other forms of control, Afghanistan will never be able to move in a forward direction. The empire's retreat from the battlefield should be used as momentum to continue the fight against the disastrous war on terror itself, as well as the criminal doctrine of U.S. hegemony.

END