



Permanent War Advocates Exploit the Kabul Bombing to Demand More War

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Glenn Greenwald: Hi, everyone, it's Glenn Greenwald, back with another episode of System Update exclusively on Rumbell and I wanted to discuss the horrifying and highly consequential events that took place earlier today in Afghanistan.

As most of you assuredly know, there was at least one, probably more suicide bombers who detonated explosive devices at the airport in Kabul. The current account for American Marines and other soldiers who have died is 12. At least a dozen other Americans have been wounded and dozens of Afghans, we don't have an exact count and probably other nationalities died as well in that horrible explosion. And there are a lot of implications, a lot of complexities to what this means for our foreign policy in the war in Afghanistan. But what I wanted to do is kind of take a step back and ensure that no matter what your views are on how we got here, what we should have done differently, if anything, and what we should do going forward, that at the very least, we're not falling prey to propaganda because there's a lot of propaganda being issued, especially by people who never wanted to leave Afghanistan in the first place, who want to continue to squander American lives and taxpayer dollars that go primarily to enriching weapons manufacturers and the arms industry to little to no benefit to the United States, who are exploiting this incident in order to say that not only did we make mistakes up until this point, which is a reasonable view, but now we cannot leave. We need to actually redouble our war in Afghanistan. And I think it's very important to remember that three consecutive presidents, Obama, Trump and Biden all ran and won by vowing to end the war in Afghanistan because polls have shown for over a decade that a large majority of Americans on a bipartisan basis believe that it's long past time to end the war.

So this idea of ending the war in Afghanistan was not a precipitous decision by anyone. It was something that the American public has debated over the course of ten or more years and that three consecutive administrations wanted to do and advocated doing. And remember, it was President Trump who initiated and consecrated negotiations with the Taliban to leave by May 1st in exchange for their promise, which everyone agrees, including President Trump,

they kept not to attack American forces. And it was Joe Biden who made the decision to go forward with this withdrawal. So whatever your views are on whether it should have been done differently and whether huge mistakes are made, set those to the side for the moment to at least acknowledge that withdrawing from Afghanistan is something that the American public has been demanding to do, so that we spend our resources on our own country and on Americans and not in a war that everyone knows has producing very little.

And yet these people who want to stay are wasting no time exploiting today to try and ensure that we can't leave. Let's just look at a couple of examples, beginning with Senator Sasse of Nebraska, who posted a statement specifically to President Biden, the key paragraph of which reads, "You are the commander in chief, sir, reverse course and fight for our people. This is likely to get worse and weakness will accelerate the bloodshed. Lord, have mercy on Americans in harm's way." His full statement that he posted was even longer. It was saying, "rip up the August 31st deadline", that President Trump and President Biden negotiated with the Taliban, which everyone knows, and the Taliban has said if America doesn't leave by the agreed to date, they will initiate hostilities against the United States, which means we would have to not only keep those forces that we have there, but send in a huge amount more to basically restart the war with the Taliban. He then goes on to say, "we simply cannot strand Americans behind enemy lines in the new capital city of global jihad", which you can agree with or not. Most people do agree that we have a responsibility to get Americans out. But that doesn't mean which is what he wants, that we need to send huge numbers of troops and to reengage the Taliban and restart the war in Afghanistan as though 20 of the last 20 years never happened. There's a very similar statement from the Republican leader in the Senate, Mitch McConnell, who says what we all agree with that "it is sickening and enraging to hear that at least 12 U.S. service members have been killed at the hands of terrorists in Kabul." He then goes on to say, "we need to redouble our global efforts to confront these barbarian enemies who want to kill Americans and attack our homeland." In other words, this war on terror that is now more than two decades old, being fought by people who weren't even born when it began. That has put trillions of dollars from the American taxpayers into the pocket of Mitch McConnell's donors and the military industrial complex that Dwight Eisenhower warned about back in 1961. Not only does he not want to reduce it after 20 years, he wants to redouble it. Speaking on behalf of those who fund and donate to his campaign and his status in Washington and further empowering the deep state and the CIA and the Pentagon. That's what both Senator Sasse and Senator McConnell are calling for, knowing that all of us have very raw emotions, seeing this image of what happened.

But there's one propagandistic exhibit that I really wanted to take the time to examine, because it's a master class in how the deep state operatives, the Pentagon, the intelligence community, tries to manipulate and play on the decency and emotions of the American public to ensure that war never ends. It's an appearance on CNN earlier today by H.R. McMaster, the former national security adviser to President Trump, who left with a lot of drama and a huge amount of conflict with the president he served because he believed that Trump was

pursuing foreign policy, that, in his view, were insufficiently confrontational with Russia and Syria, constituted surrender, constituted retreat from the world. In other words, he was angry at the person who was an elected president in Donald Trump and was making decisions that the unelected military officials in the White House disagreed with. That to H.R. McMaster is. He's also somebody, it's worth remembering, who was part of this horde of senior military officials that from almost the beginning of President Trump's administration, the corporate media was insisting these were the people, not the elected president, these were the people, these generals and admirals who are going to save America from the president we had just elected by undermining and subverting the decisions, the foreign policy decisions of Donald Trump. This is what the media narrative was here just six months into President Trump's presidency in August 2017 Politico heralding them. "Trump's generals are trying to save the world, starting with the White House." That was the media's view of people like H.R. McMaster and General Mattis and General Kelly, who became Trump's chief of staff, that they were going to, as generals or senior military officials, prevent Donald Trump from carrying out the wishes of the American people. That is the very definition of a deep state, a military that is a permanent power class in Washington, accountable democratically to nobody yet that serves as a backstop whenever the elites of a country think that voters chose wrong and at the same time that they were calling for McMaster and these other generals to save the country from the choices that we as voters had made, they were simultaneously mocking, as some kind of deranged conspiracy theory, the idea that the United States has a deep state at all. They were calling for the deep state to undermine and subvert and sabotage Trump while simultaneously insisting that there was no such thing as a deep state and only crazed conspiracy theorists believe that and that McMaster was key to that because he has long been revered by the national security blob, the deep state and the corporate press and Washington. And he still is, which is why he took center stage today at this crucial moment.

Now, it's vital to note that McMaster is also somebody who has long opposed withdrawal from Afghanistan, not just under President Biden, but also President Trump. In fact, he spent all of 2020 denouncing Trump for surrendering and retreating and giving over Afghanistan to the terrorists as though that country is the property of the United States and we should spend our money not to improve the lives of American citizens at home, but to improve Kandahar and Kabul. Here, for example, is just one of many examples from Politico. In September of 2020 headlined, "H.R. McMaster Rebukes Trump over Taliban Talk". So he's somebody who way before this incident today was opposed to leaving Afghanistan. He's somebody who has long been abusing his position to try and ensure that the hawkish policies that he wants that the American people rejected in polls by electing Trump would prevail.

So let's look at this incredibly revealing interview that he did on CNN today, where he not only disseminated immense propaganda, but also just invented things out of [nowhere], knowing that emotions are so raw on the part of Americans to try and convince us that we need to continue to fight the Taliban.

McMaster: This is what we're facing and this is what happens when you surrender to jihadist

terrorists. And I think Jim what's important about this, you may hear this is ISIS-K or whatever, but these terrorist organizations exist in an ecosystem along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and now all across Afghanistan in which they share people and resources. Siraj Haqqani, is the military commander of the Taliban, and he's a central figure in Al-Qaida. This is a myth, right, that the Taliban is separate from Al-Qaida and these other groups.

Glenn Greenwald: Now, listen to what he said there. This is a myth. That ISIS-K, which everyone is alleging was the group behind the suicide attack in Afghanistan. He's saying it's a myth that that group has any separation from either Al-Qaida or the Taliban. In other words, he's revitalizing, rejuvenating the script that led to this war in the first place that the Taliban were in bed with the terrorists who killed us. In that case, it was Al-Qaeda. In this case, it was ISIS-K. The reason we know this is a complete lie, is because ISIS-K is a group that has been at war with the Taliban over the course of many years. It somehow emerged in Afghanistan and in parts of Pakistan. No one knows who funded it. No one knows who created it. But we know that it was a force that largely was devoted to fighting the Taliban on the grounds that they're not extreme enough, on the grounds that they're not religiously fanatic enough. And this is the reality. You can go and see media reports of battles between ISIS-K and the Taliban. And yet here's McMaster trying to convince you that they're all one and the same, that if ISIS-K attacks America, it means the Taliban has to. Let's listen to what else he said.

McMaster: I would not be surprised in any way if the Kabul attack network was used as a cut out for the Taliban so they can humiliate us on the way out and still continue to play this, because I don't think they think we're serious.

Glenn Greenwald: There he is just saying, not declaratively, but saying "I wouldn't be surprised if" - meaning he has no basis whatsoever for believing. He's just trying to put that out there into the ecosphere, to the to your brains, essentially, that you should believe that this was not done by ISIS-K, but by the Taliban itself, as if the Taliban has any motive in having this violent attack, which is the only thing that could prevent what they want most, which is the United States to leave their country. The people who are hurt most by this terrorist attack today, aside from the people who were killed, is the Taliban. This is what they have been spending a full year or more ensuring did not happen. President Trump has been touring the country since he left the White House praising the Taliban. Not morally. No one thinks the Taliban is moral, but as rational thinkers, as good faith negotiators, as tough negotiators, and particularly praising them for honoring their agreement that they made with him in Doha to not to attack American soldiers as a condition for the United States leaving. They demonstrated for a long time not that - no one is praising morality, no one's praising their honor. What we're looking at is the fact that they've demonstrated the capacity to act in their own rational self-interest. Doing a terrorist attack like this, hiding behind ISIS would be the worst possible thing they could possibly do. There's zero evidence for it, which means CNN should not be broadcasting that kind of a claim which is incredibly inflammatory at this moment. Obviously, if the Taliban is behind it, that would change a lot of people's thinking

about whether we should leave. And they just let him say that with no evidence and with a mountain of evidence suggesting that it's false.

McMaster: They think we're not serious people Jim. I mean, so our weakness encourages them to be emboldened. And, of course, they're going to have, as you mentioned, a safe haven support base, access to resources that will make them extraordinarily dangerous, as well as the ability to now say, "hey, look, we're winning, right? We've established the Islamic Emirate come to our cause", much like ISIS did when they recruited 30,000 fighters at the drop of a hat once they took over territory the size of Britain in Iraq and Syria. And then, of course, we had to go back, Jim. So now I would just ask, what was it worth really? What would be a better outcome?

Glenn Greenwald: Everything he's talking about there, the emergence of ISIS, the emergence of these attacks, has all been taking place while the United States was in Afghanistan. Do you see the logic of what he's saying? He's citing things that have happened while the US was there as an argument as to why the US can't leave. The US being there hasn't prevented any of these attacks. There are thousands upon thousands of Afghan civilians who have died during the last 10 years, the last 20 years of the war, often because of US bombs, but also because of these groups that the US can't possibly solve. We cannot fix Afghanistan even if we sent in 100,000 troops. What this 20 year failed war demonstrates is that we cannot fix other countries. He doesn't want to go there or stay or redouble our efforts because he thinks we can fix Afghanistan. He knows we can't. He, though, is part of this class that benefits in power and profit by having you send your kids to wars that never end and your taxpayer dollars going to his friends in Raytheon and General Dynamics and having the CIA and the Pentagon and the NSA get more and more powerful. This is the propaganda to which we've been subjected for 20 years. It's the reason why this war that is a failure and a fraud has never ended and why they're so eager to immediately jump on this, to now exploit it.

So I think that's really the key. We're all going to have differences of opinion that can be resolved as we debate it once America gets home from this war about whether there are mistakes made in the planning, whether there really was any way to withdraw from a war that we actually lost without it being chaotic and ugly, maybe there were better ways. I haven't heard very many things, whether we kept Bagram Air Base or anything else. I'm not convinced that it would have prevented us from being in this situation. But whatever else is true, we should not allow liars like H.R. McMaster, propagandists like Senator McConnell and Senator Saxton who never want wars to end to manipulate the emotions that we're all feeling right now. Whatever we decide needs to be the byproduct of rational discourse. And that's the opposite of what this is.

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