

## Afghanistan Withdrawal Plans Not Enough

Written by Mike Honda

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On March 16, 2011, I joined my Co-Chairs of the Congressional Progressive Caucus Task Force on Peace and Security, and 76 other Members of Congress, in sending a letter to the President asking him to move swiftly to end America's longest war, the war in Afghanistan.

Since then, the Co-Chairs have continued to call on the Administration to move towards a significant, swift and sizeable reduction in our troops in Afghanistan, meeting or exceeding the number of troops on the ground before the escalation.

Similarly, the Democratic National Committee, of which I am vice-chair, called for a "sizeable and significant" drawdown beginning in July.

Even the U.S. Conference of Mayors called for an end to the Afghanistan war. In poll after poll, the majority of Americans are consistently calling for an end to this war.

A significant redeployment of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, beginning this month, would have sent a clear message that the United States does not seek a permanent presence in Afghanistan. This move would recognize that we cannot afford the war in Afghanistan – costing nearly \$10 billion per month – while American families struggle to stay afloat amid the slow recovery of our nation's economy.

The Co-Chairs of the CPC Task Force on Peace and Security believe that a significant, swift and sizeable troop reduction in Afghanistan is necessary. Especially given the fact that the CBO reported recently that ending the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would save this country \$1.7 trillion dollars. And especially given the fact that a recent Brown University study shows that the United States has spent \$3.7 trillion dollars in these wars since 2001.

Anything less hurts our nation's future and is unacceptable. It is time to focus on securing a future of economic opportunity and prosperity for the American people, and the President must move swiftly and boldly to end the war in Afghanistan and bring our troops home now.

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The President's announcement last month does not reflect a significant policy change in Afghanistan.

This strategy does not represent a drawdown in Afghanistan, but rather aims at maintaining the status quo through the end of 2012.

Simply removing the 30,000 "surge" troops from Afghanistan means that by the end of summer 2012, we will be exactly where we were in late 2009. Tens of thousands of American soldiers will continue to fight a battle that their commanders insist will only end with a political solution.

Peace in Afghanistan will depend ultimately on an Afghan solution, not on American soldiers.

Everyone seems tired of this war -- from Republicans and Democrats in Washington, to Afghans in Kabul, to Americans in Kansas. Administration officials acknowledged that due to America's mounting debt and deficits, war costs -- at nearly \$120 billion annually for Afghanistan alone -- are no longer sustainable.

Republicans gave similar ground with Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers and Defense Subcommittee member Jack Kingston expressing concern about the costs, the mission and the lack of progress -- bolstering Republican Senator Dick Lugar's call for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.