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NATO Sees Failure in Afghanistan, Jostles to Foot the Bill

By John Glaser

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The goals for the U.S. and its NATO allies in Afghanistan **have been significantly scaled down**, as leaders of the alliance meeting in a Chicago summit this weekend acknowledge the **utter failure of the war**.

The new goals have abandoned lofty notions like democracy and are settling on making sure Afghanistan has security forces that will prevent an al-Qaeda safe haven on behalf of the U.S. But even that may be unattainable and simply costs too much.

The Obama administration **is asking** the up to 60 nations and organizations attending this weekend's conference to pitch in and help pick up the tab for the over \$4 billion in aid Afghanistan will need annually. After all, America still will have to **pick up most of the tab** for all the JSOC teams **conducting night raids and drone attacks into Pakistan** which will continue long after the 2014 "withdrawal," **until about 2024**.

The current Afghan National Security Force is at about 345,000 – an army of 195,000 and a police force of almost 150,000 – just shy of the goal of 352,000. But they are not sufficient: they **consistently get into gun battles with their American and NATO counterparts and less than 1 percent of them can operate independently**, without NATO guidance.

So NATO is expected to endorse a smaller force, with some suggesting numbers as low as 228,500. Even that will be difficult for the West to cover financially.

Michael O'Hanlon, a hawkish senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, suggested that everybody just wants out of the failure of a war in Afghanistan, saying NATO can "not even worry about whether [they] lose the war," and doesn't want to waste anymore money on it.