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US Begins Talks to Extend Troop Presence in Afghanistan Beyond 2014

By John Glaser

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The US [has begun negotiations](#) with the Kabul government over the extension of troop presence past 2014, despite repeated claims by the Obama administration that the war in Afghanistan will come to an end that year.

Vice President Joe Biden, during last week's debate with VP candidate Paul Ryan, told tens of millions of Americans, yet again, that the US is leaving Afghanistan in 2014.

“We are leaving in 2014, period, and in the process, we're going to be saving over the next 10 years another \$800 billion,” Biden said. “We've been in this war for over a decade. The primary objective is almost completed. Now all we're doing is putting the Kabul government in a position to be able to maintain their own security. It's their responsibility, not America's.”

But US and Afghan negotiators met in Kabul last week to talk about the formal security agreement that will govern the presence of US troops past 2014. And more such meetings are already set to take place.

This has been a long time coming. Reports have been coming out for almost a year saying that Washington has been working on a deal with Kabul to keep US troops in Afghanistan [at least until 2024](#), a full decade beyond the withdrawal date the Obama administration has been touting.

NATO on Monday also [announced](#) it will also keep international troops in Afghanistan past 2014 alongside US troops, supposedly in training and advisory roles.

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The *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) last week that “Western officials have mentioned the residual American force as ranging from a few thousand to some 20,000.”

“In addition,” [writes](#) Micah Zenko, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, “some US policymakers [assume](#) that Afghanistan will serve as hub for special operations raids and drone strikes into Pakistan.”

The complete and utter failure of the US and its NATO allies to get anything constructive done in Afghanistan for the past 11 years should be testament enough that another 11 years won’t do any good either.

The stated mission of the US in the war in Afghanistan has been to eliminate the Taliban and al-Qaeda and prevent their return by building up a stable Afghan government and independent security forces. Every one of these goals have been objective failures, and experts and commentators across the political spectrum acknowledge this.

The fact that the insurgency in Afghanistan is as strong as ever, even after 11 years of facing off against the world’s most advanced military, is an indication that it will remain alive and well so long as there are any occupation forces on the ground and so long as the Kabul government is propped up by hostile foreign governments. Staying in Afghanistan beyond 2014 – indeed, beyond tomorrow – makes no strategic, or moral sense.