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Top US General in Afghanistan Sees ‘Uncertain Future’

By John Glaser

January 31, 2013

The departing top general in Afghanistan, Gen. John Allen, thinks “hard-fought security gains have often failed to bring about effective governance that would ensure long-term stability,” reports the *Washington Post*.



Allen, unsurprisingly, acknowledges what has become a virtual consensus, that the war in Afghanistan has failed to achieve its goals of defeating the Taliban insurgency and establishing security and stability.

Instead the insurgency is alive and well and rates of violence are higher than when Obama decided to surge in 2009. Now, the Obama administration is attempting to withdraw most troops by 2014, although a significant residual force of tens of thousands is expected to remain.

“In some ways, it feels like I’m leaving family behind to an uncertain future,” Allen said, as he discussed his departure as top general in a failed war.

He’s not alone in his assessment. British Defense Secretary Philip Hammond said last week that there is a “growing realisation on both sides of” the conflict in Afghanistan “that neither side can win outright.”

“A decisive end seems nowhere in sight,” The Associated Press [reported](#) in October, noting the enduring Taliban insurgency, the failure of a negotiated settlement, and the weakness of the US-backed Kabul government.

“We are probably headed for stalemate in 2014,” says Stephen Biddle, a George Washington University professor who has advised US commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq. Biddle warns that the US will probably be pumping billions of dollars a year into Afghanistan for decades to come in an attempt to prevent collapse and civil war.

The Taliban actually control entire parts of the country, where they “collect taxes, maintain law and order, and adjudicate disputes,” Dexter Filkins [reported](#) in the *New Yorker* in July. An Afghan told Filkins, the “country will be divided into twenty-five or thirty fiefdoms, each with its own government,” as soon as they Americans leave.