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www.afgazad.com

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<http://news.antiwar.com/2016/05/20/nato-extends-afghanistan-mission-beyond-2016/print/>

NATO Extends Afghanistan Mission Beyond 2016

By Jason Ditz

May 20, 2016

2016 is almost half way over, and the war in Afghanistan is going as bad as ever. Though it's not as high-profile a topic of discussion at NATO meetings 15 years into the failing occupation, the alliance once again agreed to extend the military operation, which was scheduled to end at the end of 2016.

This wasn't the first "end of the war" date, and indeed to hear NATO talk, the war officially "ended" years ago, even if their military involvement didn't significantly change on that date. Rather, the increasingly unpopular war was rebranded as a "training mission."

No one had any realistic expectation that the 2016 date would be the actual end to the mission, but rather it was just the latest in a series of dates set down the road as the alliance continued to not achieve its goals and continued to try to present those goals as coming soon.

The US, of course, had no intention of withdrawing at the end of 2016 at any rate, and has already pushed their end date to the end of 2017, and later extending it to an indefinite point in the future. The NATO announcement just means they'll have company from the other nations, at least the ones still willing to throw troops at the war.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also confirmed that the alliance is separately debating a plan to extend the subsidy of Afghanistan's military beyond the present end date of 2020. After 15 years of occupation, NATO has created a huge Afghan military, but the nation has virtually no economy, no tax base, and no chance of paying for it on their own. Most analysts agree this subsidy is going to continue for decades to come.