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The War That's Not a War

Posted By Rep. Ron Paul

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Statement in the House by Rep. Ron Paul of Texas on funding the war in Afghanistan.

In January 1991, we went to war in the Middle East against Saddam Hussein, Iraq's dictator who was our ally during the Iran-Iraq war. A border dispute between Kuwait and Iraq broke out after our State Department gave a green light to Hussein's invasion.

After Iraq's successful invasion of Kuwait, we reacted with gusto and have been militarily involved in the entire region 6,000 miles from our shores ever since. This has included Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. After 20 years of killing and a couple trillion dollars wasted, not only does the fighting continue with no end in sight, but our leaders threaten to spread our bombs of benevolence on Iran.

For most Americans, we are at war, at war against a tactic called terrorism, not a country. This allows our military to go any place in the world without limits as to time or place. But how can we be at war? Congress has not declared war, as required by the Constitution, that is true. But our Presidents have, and Congress and the people have not objected. Congress obediently provides all the money requested for the war.

People are dying. Bombs are dropped. Our soldiers are shot at and killed. Our soldiers wear a uniform; our enemies do not. They are not part of any government. They have no planes, no tanks, no ships, no missiles, and no modern technology. What kind of a war is this anyway, if it really is one? If it was a real war, we would have won it by now. Our stated goal since 9/11 has been to destroy al Qaeda.

Was al Qaeda in Iraq? Not under Saddam Hussein. Our leaders lied us into invading Iraq and deceived us into occupying Afghanistan. There is still really no al Qaeda in Iraq and only 100 or so in Afghanistan, and yet there is no end in sight to the war. Could there have been other reasons for this war that is not a war? A military victory in Afghanistan is illusive. Does anyone really know who we are fighting and why?

Why has the war not ended? Nine years, and it continues to spread. Some claim it is to keep America safe, that our soldiers are fighting and dying for our freedom, defending our Constitution. Are we being lied to in order to keep us in this spreading war, just as we were lied to in the 1960s to keep us in Vietnam?

We own the Iraq Government, as we do Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, we are fighting the Taliban, those dangerous people with guns defending their homeland. Once they were called the Mujahideen, our old allies, along with bin Laden, in the fight to oust the Soviets from Afghanistan in the 1980s. In that effort, our CIA funded radical jihad against that nasty foreign occupier, the Russians. What gratitude. Those same people now resent our benevolent occupation, with a little violence thrown in.

The resistance to our presence grows as our perseverance wanes. Our people are waking up, but our officials refuse to recognize the longer we stay, the greater is the support for those dedicated to the principle that Afghanistan is for Afghans who resent all foreign occupation.

The harder we fight a war that is not a war, the weaker we get and the stronger becomes our enemy. When an enemy without weapons can respect an army of great strength, the most powerful of all history, one should ask, who has the moral high ground?

Military failure in Afghanistan is to be our destiny. Changing generals without changing our policies or our policymakers perpetuates our agony and delays the inevitable.

This is not a war that our generals have been trained for. Nation building, police work, social engineering is never a job for foreign occupiers and never an appropriate job for soldiers trained to win wars.

A military victory is no longer even a stated goal of our military leaders or our politicians, as they know that type of victory is impossible.

The sad story is, this war is against ourselves, our values, our Constitution, our financial well-being and common sense. And at the rate we're going, it's going to end badly.

What we need are honest leaders with character and a new foreign policy.