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Long Wars and Peace Prizes

Posted By [Jeff Huber](#)

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Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who has become the point man for the long-war mafia, delivered his [ultimatum](#) to President Barack Obama on Friday, Oct. 9. As has been his practice over the past several weeks, McChrystal proxy-leaked details of his demands through the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and other sources. The *Journal* says one of McChrystal's proposed options calls for 60,000 additional troops, and "several officials" say the "maximum variant" is even larger.

How odd it will seem to future historians that the world's sole superpower seriously considered escalating a war in a country that is not a threat to anyone. The most insane tenet of McChrystal's proposals is to train up [400,000 Afghan security forces](#). 400,000 armed and trained Afghans is the last thing we want. Five years from now we'll have to deploy 60,000 troops to defend Iran from Afghanistan. Won't that be a kick in the cup?

A "senior military official" says McChrystal is concerned that some of Obama's advisers are telling him the Taliban are not a threat to the United States. That would be tantamount to Obama's advisers telling him the sun doesn't rise in the West. The Taliban want us to leave their country, that's all. They may or may not get back control of Afghanistan if we leave it, but why should we care? Afghans have been controlling their own affairs for thousands of years, and not once have they invaded Poland or France.

The *Times* quotes the senior military official (he insisted on anonymity because he's a sanctioned leaker) as saying, "The real question is, do you want the [Taliban](#) to be in power in Afghanistan? If you don't, then they have to be addressed through a counterinsurgency campaign."

Poppycock. There are ways to address the Taliban other than through the kind of nation-birthing counterinsurgency campaign that McChrystal and his allies – who include Gen.

David Petraeus and Adm. Mike Mullen – are trying to cram up our nose pores. Our counterinsurgency doctrine is a crock of beans. In the case of Afghanistan, it purports that we can transport a culture from the Middle Age to the 21st century by flooding it with teenagers armed with M-16s, Oakley sunglasses, and [inferior body armor](#).

If the Taliban take back power in Afghanistan, so what? Hamid Karzai, the guy in power whom we're backing now, is a knock-knock joke (Who's there? Nobody). We'd have been far better off after 9/11 to tell one-eyed, illiterate Taliban leader Mohammed Omar to cough up Osama bin Laden in return for a shiny new Cadillac. At the cost of many millions of Cadillacs later, we're no further along in Afghanistan than we were from the outset.

Obama's [National Security Adviser James Jones](#) says al-Qaeda now has fewer than 100 fighters, and even McChrystal admits they aren't in Afghanistan. Someone needs to explain why we should escalate a foreign war to counter a threat that insignificant.

Pouring more troops into Afghanistan would be a travesty. We need to go back to a global security posture that looks like the one we had before we got into the business of nation-birthing, one in which we strike surgically with naval, air, and special operations forces, and step away. Invading and occupying countries as a national pastime is a grand strategy for fools.

[Fred Kagan](#), the darling of the military-industrial-congressional complex, was a [key contributor](#) to McChrystal's Afghanistan analysis. Neocon Kagan is a professional warmonger who never saw a war he didn't like or couldn't justify. (Defense contracts for all my [friends](#)!)

The Pentagon's blatant media assault on President Obama continues. It began around Sept. 18 when a [McClatchy](#) article noted that the military is growing "impatient" with Obama on Afghanistan and cited unnamed "officers at the Pentagon in Kabul" as saying McChrystal will resign if he doesn't get what he wants. The leak of his analysis to [Bob Woodward](#) came on Sept. 21, in a story that warned "More Forces or Mission Failure." McChrystal's [60 Minutes](#) infomercial on Sept. 27 was a Douglas MacArthur-like act of blatant insubordination. McChrystal followed that with a [speech in London](#) to a warfare-centric think-tank in which he repeated his position: if Obama doesn't give me what I want, it will be his fault when we lose.

Among the latest assaults is an Oct. 11 article from right-wing media maven Rupert Murdoch's [Times of London](#) that heralds "Barack Obama ready to pay fighters to ditch the Taliban." *Times* doesn't mention that bribing insurgents is precisely how "King David" Petraeus created the illusion of success in the Iraq surge. The article notes that "Despite five war councils in two weeks, President Barack Obama has so far failed to come up with a strategy for the conflict." The Pentagon has had eight years to come up with a strategy for Afghanistan and failed to come up with anything better than its long-war mantra, a policy that says *we can't win, we just want to keep fighting*. Now, the lack of a coherent strategy is somehow the fault of Obama, who has been commander in chief for less than a year.

Obama made an enormous mistake when he called the Afghanistan conflict a "war of necessity." We need to fight in Afghanistan like fish need running shoes. Afghanistan is a [discombobulated society that couldn't work itself out of a paper bag](#). Al-Qaeda consists of

fewer than [100 fighters](#), and the Taliban, which our intelligence describes as a "[franchise operation](#)," has no interest in or capability of invading the United States.

Let's hope our Nobel winner finds the courage to stand up to the media blitz he's facing.