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## The US of A breaks the Soviet record

By Glenn Greenwald

NOV 26, 2010

Even for the humble among us who try to avoid jingoistic outbursts, some national achievements are so grand that they merit a moment of pride and celebration:

### US presence in Afghanistan as long as Soviet slog

The Soviet Union couldn't win in Afghanistan, and now the United States is about to have something in common with that futile campaign: nine years, 50 days.

On Friday, the U.S.-led coalition will have been fighting in this South Asian country for as long as the Soviets did in their humbling attempt to build up a socialist state.

It seems clear that a similar -- or even grander -- prize awaits us as the one with which the Soviets were rewarded. I hope nobody thinks that just because we can't identify who the Taliban leaders are after almost a decade over there that this somehow calls into doubt our ability to magically re-make that nation. Even if it did, it's vital that we stop the threat of Terrorism, and nothing helps to do that like spending a full decade -- and counting -- invading, occupying, and bombing Muslim countries.

The good news -- beyond our shattering this record and thus showing that we can still kick those Soviets around even after they no longer exist -- is that this decade of utter futility hasn't at all diminished the Government's appetite for endless war in the Muslim world. By all accounts, the administration is actively debating whether to accelerate its

already escalated intervention in Yemen. We've dramatically increased our covert actions in countless countries across the Muslim world. And today, former Bush State Department legal adviser John Bellinger III (one of the "moderates" from that era) argues in *The Washington Post* for a re-writing of the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) -- not in order to rescind it after nine years of endless war-fighting, but rather to **expand it**, on the ground that it "provides **insufficient authority** for our military and intelligence personnel to conduct counterterrorism operations today" and outrageously fails to empower the President's "wish to target or detain a terrorist who is **not part of al-Qaeda**" (for good measure, he also wants the new law to authorize the killing of American citizens and to allow detention without charges).

Clearly, the AUMF is far too narrow and weak for our purposes since -- as Bellinger notes -- this is all we've been able to do in its name:

The Bush and Obama administrations have relied on this authority to wage the ground war in Afghanistan; to exert lethal force (including drone strikes) against al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia; and to detain suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban members in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Afghanistan.

What kind of lame AUMF is that? A decade's worth of war, some slaughtering through the use of remote-controlled sky robots over a few countries, and a worldwide regime of lawless detention? How are we supposed to Stay Safe when we tie one arm behind our back that way?

Fortunately, if this vision of Expanded Endless War proves to be unwise, the harm will be contained, since the U.S. -- unlike the former Soviet Union -- is so financially strong that it can easily sustain this. And whatever else is true, there's one thing we should all be able to agree on: the person presiding over all of this deserves the Nobel Peace Prize.