

VFW Strongly Supports New Afghan Strategy

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"President Obama set the conditions for success in Afghanistan, and he did it without lowering any bars" said Thomas J. Tradewell Sr., a combat wounded Vietnam veteran from Sussex, Wis. "What we now need is for Congress and the American people to get behind him and destroy this global threat to world peace once and for all."

President Obama announced yesterday he will deploy 30,000 additional troops into Afghanistan, which will bring the U.S. contingent to almost 100,000. NATO allies have also been asked to provide 10,000 more troops, which will up their total to more than 50,000. Collectively, the additional 40,000 troops matches what ground commander Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal said he needed to better target the insurgency, secure population centers, and properly train more Afghan Security Forces so that they can begin securing their own country.

A military counterinsurgency effort aimed at protecting the Afghan people is one of three parts of the president's new strategy. A second is a civilian surge that involves working with allies, international agencies and the Afghan people so that the Afghan government can take advantage of the improved security, and the third is a partnership with neighboring Pakistan, where bolder and more frequent attacks are occurring.

"Moving forward, we are committed to a partnership with Pakistan that is built on a foundation of mutual interests, mutual respect and mutual trust," said Obama. "We will strengthen Pakistan's capacity to target those groups that threaten our countries, and have made it clear that we cannot tolerate a safe haven for terrorists whose location is known and whose intentions are clear."

The president is hopeful that the initiatives, partnerships and eventual transfer of responsibilities will permit a reduction in U.S. combat troops to begin by the summer of 2011. "Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground," he said.

"President Obama's message was on target," said the VFW national commander, who hopes that an arbitrary date 18 months away is not interpreted as a firm troop withdrawal deadline

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by America's enemies or by politicians and pundits in Washington.

"The president said the way forward in Afghanistan is to destroy an enemy who attacked us on 9/11 and who continues to carry out attacks around the globe, and he said any eventual troop withdrawal will be based on conditions on the ground," explained Tradewell.

"Our brave men and women in uniform and their families have singularly shouldered the war on terrorism for more than eight years. Now the president is giving them what they need to succeed in Afghanistan — more boots on the ground and a clearer mission focus," said Tradewell, who said it was most appropriate for the president to make his announcement at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., where many graduating officers will soon be implementing the new strategy.

"The VFW strongly supports this decision, as should America."