

# Obama's Afghanistan Speech: No Mention of "Victory"

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Posted by Mark Knoller

[Watch CBS News Videos Online](#) WEST POINT, NY (CBS) – Ending two-and-a-half months of sometimes anguishing deliberations, President Obama concluded the only responsible way out of Afghanistan is to first send in more troops. Thirty-thousand more troops.

The word "victory" did not appear in the president's address to the nation. Instead, he said his objective is to bring the war in Afghanistan "to a successful conclusion."

Making his first appearance as Commander-in-Chief before an audience of cadets here at the U.S. Military Academy, the president sought to explain what he portrayed as an unavoidable decision to escalate the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

"If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan, I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow," he said.

[Watch CBS News Videos Online](#) Instead, he authorized the deployment of another 30,000 troops in the hope they can reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny al Qaeda a safe-haven. He wants the additional U.S. forces to train Afghans in the hope he can start to withdraw Americans by July 2011.

He didn't use the word "withdraw." He said the U.S. could "begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan."

He said his overarching goal would remain the same: "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future."

Though he was setting a target date by which to start drawing down on the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, Mr. Obama did not want to be seen establishing a timetable that al Qaeda and the Taliban could simply wait out.

[Watch CBS News Videos Online](#) "Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground," he said.

If the plan works, Mr. Obama could start to pull out American forces half a year before the presidential primaries and caucuses of 2012, easing his political burden should he choose to seek re-election.

The president knows his decision to send in additional troops is staunchly opposed by many in his party. He also sought to address, if not pre-empt, objections in Congress to the \$30-billion a year cost of deploying another 30,000 soldiers and marines.

"I am committed to addressing these costs openly and honestly," he said. But he offered no funding plan at a time when the National Debt stands at a record \$12-trillion and the deficit this year is already projected at \$1.5-trillion.

[Watch CBS News Videos Online](#) He pledged to "work closely with Congress" to fund the troops and also bring down the deficit. He didn't mention the "war surtax" being proposed by Cong. Dave Obey, D-WI, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Interestingly, in describing the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, Pres. Obama used a phrase he uses frequently to make the case that health care in America must be reformed: "The status quo is not sustainable."

He may find his objectives in Afghanistan as difficult to achieve as his health care goals at home.

[Obama Lays Out New Afghanistan Strategy](#)

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