

President Obama addresses nation

President Barack Obama addresses the United States about the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan

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Earlier this week, President Barack Obama addressed the US and the global community about what some would consider his most important and difficult decision yet: to send more troops to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.

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The President spoke at the Eisenhower Hall Theatre at the US Military Academy at West Point in New York. He began his speech by commending the efforts of the soldiers attending the event and the soldiers serving in Afghanistan.

The President then moved on to address why the conflict began, recounting the events that occurred on the morning of September 11, 2001 and recounting the zeal displayed when, "Congress authorized the use of force against al Qaeda and those who harbored them..."

As he continued, the President gave a brief timeline of the events of the war, stating that, "Within a matter of months, al Qaeda was scattered and many of its operatives were killed. The Taliban was driven from power and pushed back on its heels." He continued, saying, "...the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. After escaping across the border into Pakistan in 2001 and 2002, al Qaeda's leadership established a safe haven there."

The President then addressed the key issue of his speech, saying, "...as Commander-in-Chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30000 US troops to Afghanistan.

After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home." He continued, saying, "I do not make this decision lightly. I make

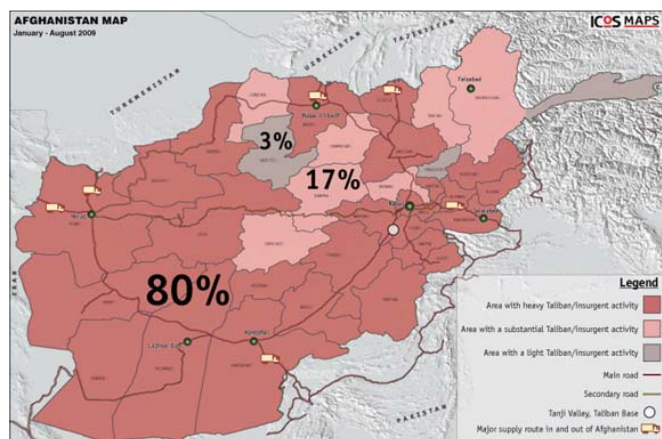
this decision because I am convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan... It is from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is from here that new attacks are being plotted as I speak."

President Obama went on to address that the ongoing conflict in these countries, "... is not just America's war... Because this is an international effort, I've asked that our commitment be joined by contributions from our allies."

The President then put forth one of the strongest statements in his speech, saying, "The days of providing a blank check are over... we will be clear about what we expect from those who receive our assistance."

Addressing the monetary costs associated with continuing and escalating the conflict in Afghanistan, the President stated that estimates for, "Our new approach in Afghanistan is likely to cost us roughly \$30 billion for the military this year."

As the President concluded his speech, he recounted that, "...when this war began,



we were united – bound together by the fresh memory of a horrific attack... I refuse to accept the notion that we cannot

summon that unity again... we are passing through a time of great trial... our cause is just, our resolve unwavering."