Remembering Afghanistan, 25 years on

On October 7, 2001, less than a month after 9/11, a U.S.-led coalition launched air strikes on Afghanistan. What followed became the longest war in American history, which only ended with a chaotic withdrawal and the Taliban's return to power in August 2021



WAR DEATHS *(Oct 2001-Aug 2021)*

U.S. & allied troops:	**3,468**	**National military & police:**	**78,526**
U.S.:	2,324	Afghanistan:	69,095
UK:	457	*Pakistan:*	*9,431*
Others:	687		

	Opposition fighters*:	**Civilians†:**
	85,731	**75,137**
Afghanistan:	52,893	50,756
Pakistan:	*32,838*	*24,381*

*Including Taliban

†Including aid workers, journalists, contractors

2001

- **Sep 9:** ***Ahmad Shah Massoud*** *(below)*, commander of ***Northern Alliance***, anti-Taliban coalition, killed by al-Qaeda operatives – secures Taliban's protection of ***Osama bin Laden*** ahead of 9/11 attacks



- **Sep 11:** Al-Qaeda hijackers crash four airliners into World Trade Center, Pentagon, and Pennsylvania field, killing nearly 3,000



- **Oct 7:** U.S. President ***George W. Bush*** launches war to topple Taliban and hunt bin Laden



- **Nov 13:** Northern Alliance forces, backed by U.S.-led coalition, enter Kabul as Taliban flee
- **Dec:** U.S. bombs ***Tora Bora*** caves – bin Laden escapes into Pakistan

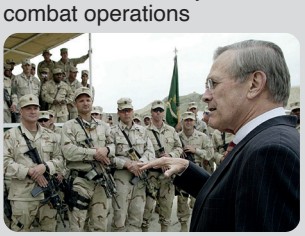
2002

- **Jan:** First ***International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)*** troops deploy, later led by NATO
- **Jun:** ***Loya Jirga***, or grand council, elects ***Hamid Karzai*** as interim head of state



2003

- **May 1:** U.S. Defence Secretary ***Donald Rumsfeld*** *(below)* declares end of major combat operations



2004

- **Oct 9:** Karzai becomes first democratically elected president

2005

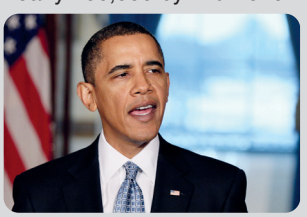
- **Sep 18:** Six million vote in first parliamentary elections in over 30 years

2006

- **May:** British troops arrive in Helmand province, Taliban stronghold
- **Oct:** NATO assumes security responsibility amid rising violence

2009

- **Feb 17:** President ***Barack Obama*** approves major increase in U.S. troops, bringing total number to nearly 100,000 by mid-2010



- **May:** ***Gen Stanley McChrystal*** named top U.S. commander – launches counter-insurgency strategy to reduce civilian casualties
- **Oct:** Karzai re-elected amid fraud claims and Taliban attacks

2010

- **Jun 23:** ***Gen David Petraeus*** replaces McChrystal
- **Nov:** NATO summit agrees plan to hand control of security to Afghan forces by 2014

2011

- **May 1:** Bin Laden killed in U.S. raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan



- **Jun 22:** Obama announces withdrawal of 33,000 troops

2013

- **Apr 23:** Taliban founder, ***Mullah Mohammed Omar,*** dies of health problems in Karachi, Pakistan. Death kept secret for more than two years



2014

- **Sep 21:** Newly elected Afghan President ***Ashraf Ghani*** *(below right)* signs power-sharing agreement with chief opponent, ***Abdullah Abdullah*** *(left)*, forming unity government



- **Dec 28:** U.S. combat mission officially ends – nearly 10,000 troops stay to support Afghan forces

2015

- Taliban resurgence with series of car bombings. ***Islamic State*** militants begin operations in Afghanistan

2017

- **Aug 21:** President ***Donald Trump*** vows "honorable" end to war, rules out nation-building

2018

- **Jan:** Taliban carry out wave of attacks in Kabul
- **Oct:** U.S. opens talks with Taliban in Doha, Qatar

2020

- **Feb 29:** U.S. and Taliban sign agreement for full troop withdrawal

2021

- **Apr 14:** President ***Joe Biden*** orders full withdrawal by September 11
- **Aug 15:** In just over one month, Taliban sweep across Afghanistan, taking control of Kabul. Afghan security forces collapse



- Chaos erupts at Kabul airport as thousands of Afghans attempt to flee. Suicide bombing by ISIS-K‡ kills 13 U.S. troops and more than 170 Afghans



- **Aug 30:** Last U.S. troops leave, ending 20-year war
- **Oct 7, 2026:** 25 years after war began and five years after foreign forces left, Afghans live under Taliban rule, with women's rights curtailed and millions in humanitarian need

Sources: Council on Foreign Relations, Costs of War Project, Watson Institute, Brown University, UK Ministry of Defence

‡Islamic State in Khorasan

Pictures: Getty Images, Newscom

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