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## ***Mattis: Afghan War Strategy ‘Working’ Because Taliban under Pressure to Talk***

A year after President Trump announced a massive escalation of the Afghan War, a decision which came at the behest of the Pentagon, metrics are suggesting the situation on the ground is worse than ever. Civilian deaths are soaring, and Afghan territory is falling increasingly under Taliban control.

Defense Secretary James Mattis insisted that the ever-worsening situation [shows that the strategy is “working.”](#) and cites increased pressure on the Taliban to join reconciliation talks as proof that the strategy is correct.



This is clearly a dramatic step back from expectations for a military victory, but Mattis isn't alone. [Other Pentagon officials have tried to rebrand possible talks are “progress”](#) in the war, 17 years in.

Yet it was just a few months ago that President Trump ruled out talks with the Taliban. This reflects the talks not being a war goal until very recently. Afghan officials made efforts to get talks going in the face of mounting losses, and that they managed to get at least some interest is being co opted by the US as vindication for a strategy that led to those losses in the first place.

With no timetable for the talks, and it not being clear they're going to happen at all, Mattis insisted the conflict still has "a long way to go." Though there has been some talk of the US reviewing its strategy because of all the military losses, Mattis and the commanders are clearly resisting this, and want the current course to continue.