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## Pentagon on Afghanistan: US ‘Can’t Really Leave’

By Jason Ditz  
January 26, 2016

While presenting it as a shift in President Obama’s mindset, Pentagon officials are talking up the idea that the US occupation of Afghanistan, which began in late 2001, is not just extended for a couple of additional years but will continue for several more decades, and for all intents and purposes may as well be permanent.

“What we’ve learned is that you can’t really leave,” one Pentagon official was quoted in the Washington Post as insisting, while other officials openly talked about a “generational approach,” in which the US stays for generations more to create an entire new Afghanistan.

Despite making some statements of aversion to “endless war,” President Obama has never really appeared all that eager to end the Afghanistan occupation, and the end dates were always speculative dates set by NATO to give the impression the war was winding down.

Yet all along, these end dates were based on the assumption of a high-miraculous improvement in the Afghan military that hasn’t happened yet, and it was always more or less assumed the date would just keep getting punted down the road until victory just sort of happens.

The change isn’t that the US is staying, but that the Pentagon is doing away with the pretense of leaving in any measurable timeframe. From the Afghan military’s widespread corruption to the

growth of ISIS in the nation's southeast, all the military talking points are now that the Afghans aren't ready, but that these Afghans likely never will be.

Instead, the shift toward "generational war" means measuring success a few decades down the road, to see if the Pentagon can successfully rear the Afghan children being born today into the sort of pro-US warrior state that they'd feel comfortable turning back over to its population. If not, we just roll the dice on the next generation, and so on.