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White House Looks at Afghanistan Pullout as an Option

Jason Ditz

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After months of the Pentagon failing to sell a concrete plan of escalation to the White House, officials now say that the administration is considering getting back on track with a drawdown headed for a full pullout from the country after 16 years.

This is happening for the same reason the Pentagon hasn't been able to sell the escalations, that a number of officials are unconvinced that the escalation is going to accomplish anything, and that they don't think there's a clear strategy for victory.

The Pentagon was more or less uniform in arguing escalations, albeit of varying sizes, and are said to be objecting to the proposed pullout as a "minority viewpoint," warning that it does not meet the goals of the conflict.

The pullout is unlikely to be immediate, if it ultimately wins out. The plan seems to be to increase reliance on special forces and drone strikes in Afghanistan to try to make up for the largely feckless Afghan military in slowing the Taliban's expansion across the country.

Ultimately though, few think any strategy is going to stop the Taliban expansion outright, with even many proponents of escalation arguing simply that it would slow the rate of loss, but punting the ultimate defeat down the road for someone else.

It's unsurprising, then, that alternate strategies are being sought, and whether it's Blackwater founder Erik Prince's mercenary plan or those on the margins pushing for tens of thousands of more US troops re-invading Afghanistan, there are few optimistic about their chances. Withdrawing, at the very least, would be an end to the war, if not the end the military wants.