



Background

General Austin Scott Miller is a retired four-star general in the United States Army and former Delta Force commander who served as the final Commander of NATO's Resolute Support Mission and U.S Forces Afghanistan from September 2018 to July 2021. He was the longest-serving commander of the war in Afghanistan, serving nearly three years in that role. General Miller's military service spans nearly four decades, serving in numerous conflicts, including Somalia, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. General Miller retired from the Army in December 2021 with numerous awards for his service, including two awards of the coveted Combat Infantryman Badge, two Purple Hearts, the Silver Star, and an unprecedented 20 Overseas Service Bars, denoting more than 10 full years in combat zones. General Miller is described as "one of the finest Combat Commanders in modern military history."

The House Foreign Affairs Committee's Investigation

1. When asked about the Committee's investigation focusing on the withdrawal and the non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO), as opposed to replicating the Afghanistan War Commission's 20-year study, General Miller agreed with the narrower focus by referring to his experience in Mogadishu.
 - a. "And it's bigger, you're right. And nothing happens in isolation. But some events happen that are so big that we end up – 3-4 October, there were a lot of things led to that in 1993. But there's a movie about 3-4 October, you know, not the five or six things that preceded it." (Page 217, Lines 19-22).

Assumption of Role as Commander

1. General Miller testified that when he arrived in Afghanistan, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) were experiencing heavy casualties. According to Miller, there were 80-90 Afghan casualties per day at the time. (Page 14, lines 19-20).
2. General Miller assessed that, while the Afghan Air Force were capable, they were wholly dependent on US contractor support. (Page 17, Lines 20-23).
3. Upon arrival in 2018, General Miller had about 15,000 troops. He testified that, given the U.S. and NATO objectives assigned at the time, he believed the U.S. could reduce troops to 8,600. (Page 28, Lines 24-25).

US Military Objectives in Afghanistan

1. General Miller testified to his mission in Afghanistan upon assumption, stating "principally it was [to] safeguard the United States of America. That may not be the exact terminology in the document... But protect it against terrorist threats." (Page 66, Lines 5-7).
2. General Miller stated that in 2020 the U.S. mission in Afghanistan was split between counterterrorism and supporting the ANSF, testifying, "I'd say it's probably 60-40 at that point, because we still had legacy." (Page 146, Lines 19-20).
3. When asked by Representative Crow about winning the war in Afghanistan, General Miller responded that in his view, winning has a different definition, which was to help the Afghan military hold off the Taliban until a political solution was reached.
 - a. General Miller: "[I]n my view of winning, is, this thing isn't going to be won militarily. And I could almost argue that it really wasn't won militarily anyway. **It was a political collapse that, you know, gave us Afghanistan today.**" (Page 155, Lines 16-19).
4. According to General Miller, it was his assessment that in 2021, **the U.S. mission to protect its interests and national security would have been better protected with 2,500 troops in**

Afghanistan and that he didn't envision staying forever given that objectives would change. (Page 152, Lines 14-25; Page 153, Lines 1-11).

Doha Agreement Negotiations

1. General Miller emphasized that his foremost concern entering the Doha negotiations rested on maintaining support for the Afghans. He stated, "what we were most concerned about as a military component of this agreement is we didn't want to leave the Afghans, we didn't want to create a deal that left the Afghans without support and allowed the Taliban to continue to attack without any support from us." (Page 22, Lines 16-19).
2. According to General Miller, the Taliban wanted no American military in Afghanistan, which, according to the Taliban, included contractors and anyone who could support counterterrorism teams in the country. (Page 149, Lines 5-6).
3. According to General Miller, although the Taliban believed conditions within the Doha Agreement bound the U.S., they did not view their promises as being conditions-based. (Page 89, Lines 17-25).
4. General Miller testified that Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Ambassador Zal Khalilzad negotiated a deal with the Taliban that rested on an assumption of eventual peace— **the negotiations did not assume a continuation of war despite assessments that the Taliban were only interested in a complete military takeover**: "Zal Khalilzad thought he was negotiating a peace deal. So this is -- now you're starting to create -- you're starting to make agreements based on a peace deal, not a continuation of a war deal." (Page 86, Lines 15-22).

Assessment of the Taliban and Compliance with Doha Agreement

1. General Miller assessed that in 2021 that the Taliban were seeking a military takeover of Afghanistan, testifying, "In '21 I assessed they were going for a takeover, just by their actions on the ground." (Page 59, Lines 10-12).
2. According to General Miller and his experience as the Commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, the Taliban failed to adhere to the conditions of the Doha Agreement, including the condition to reduce violence, testifying, that after the agreement was signed, the Taliban, "what they did is they changed their violence, they went full in on the Afghan checkpoints and trying to dump a body count up." (Page 25, Lines 15-17).
3. When asked about the "Peace Government" plan advanced by the Biden administration in early 2021 for a power-sharing agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban, General Miller confirmed the Taliban viewed the Afghan government as "illegitimate" and that he believed the Taliban would not have accepted a power sharing agreement with the Afghan government. (Page 111, Lines 1-9).
 - a. (Note: [In his interview with the Committee](#), Ambassador Khalilzad testified he was pursuing an Afghan "Peace Government" plan with Secretary Blinken's backing in 2021, that would have given the Taliban essentially an equal share of power with the Afghan government. Khalilzad explained that as 2021 proceeded, the Taliban was discussing the "percentages" of that "power-sharing" government – "50-50, 60-40, 70-30" – with the Taliban demanding an increasingly Taliban-dominated government as its military offensive gained success. (Page 147, Lines 16-25; Page 148, Lines 1-20)).
4. When asked about the Doha Agreement's condition imposed on the Taliban to not attack U.S. forces – which the Biden administration insisted the Taliban was in compliance with – **General Miller testified that the Taliban conducted "at least a couple indirect fire attacks" on U.S. forces.** (Page 114, Line 5).

5. General Miller testified the Taliban were not living up to their commitment, pursuant to the Doha Agreement, to cut ties with terrorist groups. (Page 114, Lines 19-23).
6. General Miller confirmed that once President Biden announced the U.S. military withdrawal on April 14, 2021, the Taliban no longer had incentive to negotiate with the Afghan government. (Page 136, Lines 3-5).

The National Security Council and Interagency Engagement

1. General Miller described having been invited and participating in only one initial NSC meeting under the Biden administration, and a following Deputies meeting. (Page 30, Lines 21-25; Page 31, Lines 1-4).
2. General Miller was not asked or invited to any other NSC/interagency meeting under the Biden administration and when asked whether he “wish[ed] had been invited to present at more of the Afghanistan related interagency meetings in 2021,” he responded, “I do. I mean, I thought I had something to offer.” (Page 108, Line 25).

The 2021 Withdrawal and Go to Zero Order

1. General Miller did not push back on President Trump’s order to reduce troops to 4,500 from 8,600 because the US could withdraw those troops without risk and continue to meet its objectives. (Page 103; Lines 1-5).
2. General Miller testified that while going to zero was considered by President Trump in 2020, it was walked back in accordance with military guidance, keeping troop levels at 2,500. (Page 59, Lines 19-22).
3. General Miller’s military assessment and guidance was that with 2,500 troops in Afghanistan, the U.S. could effectively support the sustainability of the ANSF and its fight against terrorism. (Page 120, Lines 12-15).
4. General Miller did not believe there would have been need for a surge beyond the existing 2,500 troops in Afghanistan, testifying, “I did not see a need for -- I could not rule out a need for a surge down the road to protect forces. But at the same time, I didn’t necessarily think it was the most likely.” (Page 32, Lines 22-24).
5. As Commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan and NATO’s Resolute Mission, General Miller advised that drawing troops to zero would lead to dire consequences.
 - a. **“My view was that going to zero things would go very bad very fast. And of course, define that, not prepared for a political or a security collapse while we’re still present, just wouldn’t be prepared.”** (Page 60, Lines 1-7).
 - b. “At zero, you lose your infrastructure...Everything goes over the horizon, to include contracted logistics support, fires. Everything goes over the horizon.” (Page 127, Lines 18-24).
6. General Miller’s assessment of going to zero remained consistent across the two administrations he served under. (Page 131, Lines 1-7).
7. General Miller described the risk and danger that came with going down to zero during the military withdrawal, stating that his primary focus, after President Biden decided to reduce troops to 0 was getting those servicemembers out safely.
 - a. “But, at that point, my focus was, how do I get these guys out of here without hurting somebody? And I’m going to be very honest with all of you. You want to talk about -- I don’t usually get scared. I don’t. I was scared. And you know what I was afraid of? I was

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afraid I was going to lose somebody... Because we were worried about the Taliban post 1 May.” (Page 201, Lines 10-24).

Collapse of the Afghan Government and Security Forces

1. General Miller testified, **“I’d say the Afghan Government died of a thousand cuts as opposed to a tipping point type thing.”** (Page 96, Lines 15-16).
2. General Miller agreed that following President Biden’s Go-to-Zero announcement, the collapse of the Afghan Army and Government had been clearly happening for months. (Page 191, Lines 19-21).
3. General Miller described how Afghan districts fell as people saw the writing on the wall with the April 2021 Go-to-Zero order and switched sides. **He attributed the Taliban’s victories to “psychological victories.”**
 - a. “[T]here weren’t a lot of battlefield victories towards the end. There was a lot of psychological victories. And it was similar to what happened in 2001, and that’s the people deciding, this fight’s over, the U.S. is leaving. So you arrest that just by sheer presence. So you slow that down. I don’t know that you stop it, but you certainly slow it down.” (Page 153, Lines 19-23).
 - b. “That was all about the people...It was, can you get the people, and, really, can you get the elders and the people that are responsible in these locations? And that’s what the Taliban targeted, very clearly. And they just went to them and said, look, if this is over and people agreed with them. And that’s why you saw the districts fell at a rapid clip.” (Page 183, Lines 18-24).
4. General Miller thought that assessments regarding the stability and longevity of the Afghan National Security Forces were overly optimistic. (Page 131 Lines 12-17).
5. General Miller testified that once the Go-to-Zero order was issued, U.S. military resources on the ground shifted from supporting the Afghan Security Forces in their fight against the Taliban, to the retrograde and getting military personnel out. (Pages 189-91).
 - a. “So then Mohammadi comes over and sees me, and I’m literally a week out, and he knows I’m leaving. And he says, ‘Just promise me that you’re going to give me air support.’... So I said, ‘Listen, you’re going to get the air support that we can provide.’ But it’s a different dynamic if something takes off at Bagram Airfield or down at Dwyer in Helmand Province, because now, to launch an aircraft, you have to get through weather. ... It’s much more sporadic. ... Now, people are going to start thinking you should be able to do that -- and I’m talking about military. This is not a -- anybody in the civilian community. They’re going to say, can you do this, can you do that, and sometimes it’s hard to say, no, I can’t. I could say that.” (Page 189-90).

Keeping U.S. Embassy Kabul Open

1. Once the Go-to-Zero order was given by President Biden, General Miller recommended that US Embassy Kabul leave along with the military, testifying, “now the overarching concern is safeguarding our forces, **safeguarding our diplomats. And so you want to try to get them out of the theater instead of having them linger in the theater.**” (Page 129, Lines 12-15).
2. General Miller recommended Embassy personnel be drawn down in May 2021, testifying in his interview, “And, again, May is when this stuff is starting to -- in my view, starting to already become readily apparent...And my view was that the -- when we talked about going to zero, that everybody needed to go to zero pretty rapidly, not just the military.” (Page 176, Lines 7-12).

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3. General Miller described how the military's withdrawal plans had to change because the guidance was now that the U.S. would keep U.S. Embassy Kabul open.
 - a. "And then it does change. It changes as the guidance changes...As you then have an embassy requirement in Kabul, now you have to give it -- provide it with an embassy security force." (Page 35, Lines 15-18).
4. General Miller described how U.S. Embassy Kabul and the State Department ignored the need for military assistance and protection, and instead assumed they could maintain the US diplomatic presence without any military.
 - a. "There was this assumption of 'we don't need the military' at first... And so this idea of a decision, 'We can do this all on our own,' changes over time to, 'Well, maybe we need 50 military,' 'Maybe we need 100,' 'Maybe we need 150,' 'Maybe we need 600,' you know, as it grew and grew" (Page 178, Lines 22-24; Page 179, Lines 9-11).
5. General Miller was asked about a May 8, 2021, meeting between State Department leadership and DoD leadership. General Miller was then presented with a statement made by former State Department Deputy Secretary for Management and Resource Brian McKeon to military leaders, in which McKeon said, "We at the State Department have a much higher risk tolerance than you guys." **General Miller responded to the Committee that he disagreed – the State Department didn't have a higher risk tolerance, but rather lacked an understanding of the risk. (Pages 196-198).**
6. General Miller foresaw the need for a NEO and warned the incoming Marine commander to prepare for a NEO, testifying "And I wasn't going to add this, but I will. I actually talked to the Marine commander who was going to go in there early, and I said, '**You're going to do a NEO at some point, because we're not doing the things we need to do to avoid a NEO. And we're going to do it probably under some really adverse conditions.**' I said, "It's going to be up to you." I said, "I would tailor your force. I would pick... your most mature Marines you have and retask, organize. Because it's going to be really hard." (Page 197, Lines 4-11).
7. General Miller stated that the State Department requested the NEO far too late. (Page 199, Lines 21-22). When asked if he believed that soldiers had to assume greater risk because the State Department was unprepared to evacuate, General Miller responded, "**if the building's already on fire before you start evacuating it, it's a much more challenging evacuation.**" (Page 200, Lines 2-3).
8. General Miller described how US allies and foreign counterparts, in contrast, all downsized their embassies because doing so made it easier to evacuate in case of an emergency. (Page 211, Lines 5-12).
9. General Miller shared his guidance the risk of maintaining an embassy presence without the U.S. military with Embassy Kabul's Chief of Mission, Ambassador Ross Wilson. (Page 34, Lines 1-4). (Note: [In his interview with the Committee](#), Ambassador Wilson stated that, to this day, "I regret that we don't have an embassy now[.]" (Page 230, Line 12)).
 - a. General Miller stated that he assumed that Ambassador Wilson got direction from "higher" to maintain an embassy presence, and that he therefore was "intent on executing that." (Page 54, Lines 9-12).
10. When speaking to the impact of the Afghanistan withdrawal, General Miller compared Afghanistan to Saigon, testifying, "And Afghanistan, I know, has affected people. I've tried to help them and, you know, help them steer in the right direction and encourage them what not to do. But I think it's not just Afghanistan, but, you know, the way we came out of there felt traumatic. It just did. **I mean, it felt traumatic for all of us, and probably not unlike what Saigon looked like for Vietnam veterans after spending so much time in Vietnam and seeing an evacuation off the roof.**" (Page 205, Lines 9-11).

Counterterrorism

1. General Miller testified that throughout 2021 the Taliban maintained ties with terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda. (Page 114, Lines 19-25; Page 115, Lines 1-6).
2. When presented with data about al-Qaeda remaining present in Afghanistan and the threat they pose to the United States, General Miller testified, "I think as long as al Qaeda is out there with an idea and some operatives, there is some threat to, if not the homeland, to U.S. interests." (Page 118, Lines 4-5).
3. In response to Representative Crow's assertion that the U.S. can still engage in counterterrorism operations via "over the horizon" capabilities, General Miller clarified, "you can still do CT operations from over the horizon, but the risk level's a little bit different." (Page 158, Lines 8-24; Page 186, Lines 12-15).
4. General Miller testified to the Taliban's continued enablement of terrorism, stating, "But, like I said, the Taliban always estimated what they could do from a counterterror perspective, and, in some cases, I believe they'll enable may potentially enable and house terrorists." (Page 204, Lines 16-18).

Engagement with Washington DC, State Department, and Allies

1. General Miller testified that, under the Trump administration, State Department leadership engaged extensively with him on Afghanistan, stating "Secretary Pompeo, we talked a lot, as well as Gina Haspel, as Director of the CIA, and the Chairman and others, to try to and the Secretary of Defense - - trying to understand the problems that were available. It was helpful." (Page 47, Lines 10-12).
2. Under the Trump administration, General Miller had access to communicate views and input that Washington could rely on as the Doha deal was being negotiated (Page 83, Lines 5-8).
3. General Miller routinely shared his assessments of the Taliban's intentions with Secretary Pompeo. (Page 92, Lines 19-25; Page 93, Lines 1-3).
4. When asked about engagement by State Department leadership under the Biden administration, General Miller testified that Secretary Blinken did not speak with him over the course of his tenure as commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan (Page 50, Lines 12-17).
5. Secretary Blinken never directly sought General Miller's assessments regarding Taliban compliance with the Doha Agreement (Page 51, Lines 18-20).
6. General Miller had no interaction with former State Department Deputy Secretary Brian McKeon. (Page 54, Line 24).
7. General Miller confirmed he believed there was a disconnect between decision makers in Washington DC and those on the ground in Afghanistan throughout 2021. (Page 140, Lines 3-7).
8. General Miller testified that NATO allies were not pleased with the United States' decision to draw troops to 0, necessitating their withdrawal, testifying, "they certainly were unhappy, and they voiced that unhappiness in different publications." (Page 137, Line 1). (Note: [In his interview with the Committee](#), State Department Counselor Derek Chollet did not acknowledge this discontent, instead stating "NATO itself didn't take a position" and "My understanding, the -- gestalt understanding that I recall was, you know, general understanding of our position, I mean, and everybody knew the threat that we were facing and were appreciative of our consultation[.]" (Page 93, Line 25, Page 94, Lines 1-5)).
9. When asked whether U.S. allies would have preferred to maintain a presence in Afghanistan, General Miller described their position as having been "committed for the long haul." (Page 112, Lines 11-15).