**War in Afghanistan**

**Part 4- 2009-Present**

**2009 Obama Changes Strategy**

* **Barack Obama**- U.S. President starting in 2009 that inherited the War on Terror, increased the number of troops in Afghanistan, and ended the war in Iraq
* Obama went to the White House promising to focus attention and resources on the faltering war effort in Afghanistan.
* On Feb. 17, 2009, he approved sending an additional 17,000 U.S. troops, on top of the 36,000 U.S. troops and 32,000 NATO service members already there.
* Obama and other top officials had concluded that a more radical change was needed; A new strategy modeled after the surge strategy in Iraq was put into place
* U.S. forces would focus on protecting the population from insurgents rather than simply trying to kill large numbers of militants.
* The strategy also involved trying to persuade enemy fighters to defect and ultimately encourage reconciliation between the Karzai government and Taliban leaders.

**Changing Generals and Escalation**

* **Stanley McChrystal**- General appointed by Obama to change the strategy in Afghanistan
* Soon after assuming command, McChrystal concluded that he did not have enough troops to execute the new strategy
* In September 2009 he laid out his concerns in a confidential report, which was subsequently leaked to the press, predicting that the war would be lost within a year without a troop surge.
* After an intensive Afghan policy review, the president delivered a speech announcing a major escalation in the war effort, with 30,000 additional troops by the summer of 2010
* During the first three months of 2010, U.S. deaths were approximately twice what they had been over the same period in 2009.

**2010- Karzai vs. Obama**

* Obama visited Afghanistan for the first time as president on March 28, delivering a stern message to Karzai that he needed to clean up corruption in his government.
* Karzai had won a new five-year term in an August 2009 election that was tainted by widespread allegations of fraud.
* Karzai vowed in his inaugural address to stamp out corruption in his government, but there were few signs in the short term that he had done so.
* Meanwhile, Karzai announced that he would attempt to reconcile with the Taliban; he repeatedly invited Mullah Omar to meet with him, but the Taliban leader refused.
* Karzai lashed out in April 2010 and even threatened to join the Taliban if the international community did not stop meddling in Afghan affairs.

**Change in Leadership...Again**

* The military command structure in Afghanistan abruptly changed again in June 2010, when Obama replaced McChrystal
* **David Patraeus**- General who took over command of the troops in Afghanistan in 2010
* In explaining the change of command, Obama said, “I welcome debate among my team, but I won’t tolerate division.”
* Despite the switch, Obama vowed that U.S. strategy in Afghanistan would not change.
* Petraeus was expected to continue McChrystal’s emphasis on protecting the Afghan population from insurgents, building Afghan government, and limiting civilian casualties.
* **Wikileaks-** a cache of classified documents relating to the Afghanistan War was published online by the whistle-blowing journalistic organization
* It detailed previously unreported civilian deaths
* Indicated that a U.S. special forces unit was tasked with capturing or killing the persons on a list of insurgent leaders,
* Revealed that the Taliban had employed heat-seeking missiles against aircraft,
* Suggested that the Pakistani intelligence service had been working with Taliban forces in spite of substantial U.S. aid to Pakistan for combating militants.

**2011**

* Nearly 10 years after eluding capture at Tora Bora in Afghanistan, bin Laden was killed by U.S. forces on May 2, 2011
* U.S. intelligence located him living in a secure compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan
* The operation, a raid carried out by a small team that reached the compound by helicopter, led to a firefight in which bin Laden died.
* The next month U.S. Secretary of Defense [Robert Gates](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1260024/Robert-M-Gates) confirmed for the first time that the U.S. government was holding reconciliation talks with the Taliban.
* Then, on June 22, Obama announced an accelerated timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan
* The plan called for the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan to be reduced by as many as 30,000 within a year, in preparation for a complete withdrawal by the end of 2014.

**2012-Present**

* Efforts to train and equip the Afghan army and police were hampered by an increase in attacks in which Afghan soldiers and police turned their weapons on NATO soldiers.

* These attacks forced NATO troops to institute more rigorous screening procedures and to suspend the training of certain units
* Meanwhile, in early 2012, U.S. and Afghan negotiators reached agreements regarding two issues that had been sources of friction between the Obama and Karzai administrations.
* The first agreement set a six-month timetable for the transfer of Afghan detainees held by the U.S. military to Afghan custody.
* The second agreement established that Afghan forces would oversee and lead night raids to apprehend or kill Taliban leaders
* In 2014, the United States and Afghanistan came to an agreement to withdrawal NATO forces but the U.S. military would continue to provide support after 2014
* Many Afghans supported the agreement because they feared that a sudden withdrawal would allow the country to slip into civil war or chaos.