

# A 'Trump Doctrine'? Clues in his new Afghanistan plan

WASHINGTON (AP) — Never tip your hand to the enemy. No timelines for military operations. No free pass for a neighbor who tolerates extremists or enables U.S. foes.

In President Donald Trump's new Afghanistan strategy, elements of a broader approach to America's most pressing national security concerns begin to emerge, consistent with his efforts in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. Though details are limited, the plan draws on organizing principles that are also woven throughout his plans for defeating the Islamic State group and containing the threats posed by North Korea and Iran.

Trump's advisers say his Afghan strategy reflects a consistent world view, both in terms of America's overseas objectives and the tactics to achieve them. But it's too soon to say whether he is being driven by a well-formed doctrine or merely coining catchphrases on the fly.

"We are not nation-building again. We are killing terrorists," Trump said in his Monday night speech. He was striving to differentiate his plan from failed approaches of the past.

As a candidate and then as president, Trump has eluded those who have tried to identify core beliefs that can reliably predict how he'll approach any given issue. Critics have painted him as a foreign policy novice, focused only on somehow showing he's winning.

Trump ran on a nationalist pledge to put "America First." But he explained this week that things look different from the Oval Office. Conceding he was overriding an initial instinct to withdraw from Afghanistan, he peppered his speech with vows to empower commanders and to squeeze Pakistan for harboring the Taliban.

While Trump has cast his approach as a fundamental shift from other presidents, he's borrowed more from them than he's inclined to admit.

George W. Bush, too, sought to pressure Pakistan to crack down on the Taliban, even as he focused far more on an idea Trump is explicitly rejecting: promoting democracy around the world.

And Trump's limited approach owes something to Barack Obama, who in his second term scaled back U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan and settled on a



In this April 2017 file photo, U.S. forces and Afghan security police are seen in Asad Khil near the site of a U.S. bombing in the Achin district of Jalalabad, east of Kabul, Afghanistan. Behind the detail-scarce rhetoric of the new Afghanistan strategy, elements of President Donald Trump's broader approach to foreign conflicts emerge: secret military plans, no "nation-building" and a reliance on regional players to squeeze wayward nations and extremist groups.

counterterrorism-focused mission not dissimilar from the new American strategy. A look at the pillars of Trump's foreign policy:

### MIND YOUR BUSINESS

The days of the U.S. military trying to "construct democracies" are over, Trump declared. Instead, he said "principled realism" will guide U.S. decisions.

That means there will be none of Bush's "nation-building" — no expansive goal to build up Afghanistan's institutions and ensure the education of girls once the U.S. ultimately withdraws.

Trump's approach in Syria is similar. There, as the Islamic State is ousted from its last major strongholds and a power vacuum results, Trump's administration has said it wants to help restore electricity, water and sewage in areas freed from IS — but no more. In Iraq, the situation is somewhat easier because there's a globally backed central government.

In Afghanistan, some questions still must be cleared up. Despite his vow of non-interference, Trump emphasized he could hold back

future military and economic aid unless the Afghan government combats problems including rampant corruption.

"We're not going to tell these countries how to govern, but we're going to condition our assistance on reforms — that's an internal contradiction," said James Dobbins, a senior diplomat in the past three administrations and former special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### KEEP YOUR PLANS QUIET

Of all the critiques of Trump's plan, the loudest is that he declined to tell Americans how many more U.S. troops will be sent to Afghanistan after 16 years of fighting.

His rationale is simple: Deny the Taliban and other extremists the advantage of anticipating U.S. military moves.

However, the contours of the Pentagon's plan have been known for months. Senior officials said Tuesday up to 3,900 more troops will go, some possibly within days.

Being unpredictable to U.S. adversaries has been a consistent Trump focus. The president was similarly coy in April in the days

before he attacked Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces for using chemical weapons. He has repeatedly refused to entertain questions about a potential pre-emptive attack on North Korea.

"We don't talk about that. I never do," Trump has said.

### DON'T "MICROMANAGE"

Rather than centralize military decision-making in the White House, a critique often leveled at Obama, Trump has delegated much of the authority to his defense secretary and warzone commanders.

"Micromanagement from Washington, D.C., does not win battles," he said in his Afghanistan speech.

Even before he unveiled his Afghan plan, the White House announced he'd given the Pentagon final say on how many troops to send. And in April, his top commander in Afghanistan was allowed to use the "mother of all bombs," the largest non-nuclear bomb ever dropped in combat. There was no need for the White House signoff.

Trump has similarly ceded decision-making about military actions in Syria and Iraq to his

**"He is clearly much more willing to give the military latitude on tactical decision than President Obama was."**

— James Jeffrey, George W. Bush former deputy national security advisor

commanders, along with decisions about counterterror strikes against targets in several countries.

"He clearly is much more willing to give the military latitude on tactical decision than President Obama was," said Ambassador James Jeffrey, Bush's former deputy national security advisor. "That's all in all a good thing for this kind of conflict."

### CRACK DOWN

As Trump vowed to get tough on Pakistan, accusing it of giving "safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror," diplomatic and military officials heard echoes of his plan for North Korea.

For more than a decade, the U.S. has pressed Islamabad to snuff out Taliban sanctuaries. Many of the group's leaders reside in Pakistan, traveling freely across the Afghanistan border. Taliban wounded are treated in Pakistani hospitals.

With North Korea, it's China that must feel the weight of U.S. pressure, Trump has said. He has tried to squeeze Beijing into cutting off lifelines of economic support to North Korea to make it harder for Pyongyang to develop weapons that could harm the U.S.

### LET LOCALS LEAD

In Afghanistan, as in Iraq and Syria, Trump's plan centers on training local forces to fight insurgents rather than relying on Americans to do most of the fighting. While the same strategy was employed by Obama, Trump has claimed credit since taking office.

"The confidence that the American people and the world heard last night from our commander in chief derives from the fact that this is exactly the approach that President Trump directed in Iraq and in Syria," Vice President Mike Pence said Tuesday.

## BRIEFLY

### Jury refuses to convict four in Nevada ranch standoff retrial

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A federal jury in Las Vegas refused Tuesday to convict four defendants who were retried on accusations that they threatened and assaulted federal agents by wielding assault weapons in a 2014 confrontation to stop a cattle roundup near the Nevada ranch of states' rights figure Cliven Bundy.

In a stunning setback to federal prosecutors planning to try the Bundy family patriarch and two adult sons later this year, the jury acquitted Ricky Lovelien and Steven Stewart of all 10 charges, and delivered not-guilty findings on most charges against Scott Drexler and Eric Parker.

More than 30 defendants' supporters in the courtroom broke into applause after Chief U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro ordered Lovelien and Stewart freed immediately and set Wednesday morning hearings to decide if Parker and Drexler should remain jailed pending a government decision whether to seek a third trial.

"Random people off the streets, these jurors, they told the government again that we're not going to put up with tyranny," said a John Lamb, a Montana resident who attended almost all the five weeks of trial, which began with jury selection July 10.

"They've been tried twice and found not guilty," Bundy family matriarch Carol Bundy said outside court. "We the people are not guilty."

### North Korea photos suggest new solid-fuel missile designs

TOKYO (AP) — North Korea's state news agency has released photos of diagrams that show what appear to be the designs of one or possibly two new missiles.

The diagrams were seen hanging on a wall behind leader Kim Jong Un during a visit to a plant that makes solid-fuel engines for the country's ballistic missile program.

One showed a missile called Pukguksong-3, which appears to be the latest in the Pukguksong, or Polaris, series. The other was harder to discern but appeared to be in the "Hwasong," or Mars, series. The photos were released by the Korean Central News Agency on Wednesday.

The KCNA report said Kim called on workers to produce more solid-fuel rocket engines and rocket warhead tips.

### Charlottesville to shroud statues after violence

The Charlottesville City Council voted to drape two Confederate statues in black fabric during a chaotic meeting packed with irate residents who screamed and cursed at councilors over the city's response to a white nationalist rally.

The anger at Monday night's meeting, during which three people were arrested, forced the council to abandon its agenda and focus instead on the tragedy that surrounded the rally. Covering the statues is intended to signal the city's mourning for Charlottesville resident Heather Heyer, who was killed when a car slammed into a crowd protesting the rally.

"I think what you saw last night was a traumatized community beginning the process of catharsis," Mayor Mike Signer told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The council meeting was the first since the "Unite the Right" event, which was believed to be the largest gathering of white nationalists in a decade. The demonstrators arrived in Charlottesville partly to protest the city council's vote to remove a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

That removal is in the midst of a legal challenge. A state law passed in 1998 forbids local governments from removing, damaging or defacing war monuments, but there is legal ambiguity about whether that applies to statues such as the Lee monument, which was erected before the law was passed. A judge has issued an injunction preventing the city from removing the Lee statue while the lawsuit plays out.

### Trump speech in Phoenix draws big crowd, protests

PHOENIX (AP) — Minor scuffles and shouting matches erupted between protesters and President Donald Trump's supporters on Tuesday with authorities on high alert as thousands of people lined up in the triple-digit heat to attend his first political rally since the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The scene was noisy, but largely peaceful as Phoenix police kept most members of the two opposing groups behind barricades and apart on separate sides of the street. As a police helicopter hovered overhead, officers wearing riot gear and carrying rifles sauntered through the lane between the sides. Authorities said no one was arrested, though a

few were treated for heat exhaustion.

Local authorities were vigilant in the aftermath of the deadly protests in Virginia and the president's comments last week about both sides having blame for violence at the white supremacist rally.

Mayor Greg Stanton had unsuccessfully called on the president to not hold the rally here so soon after the trouble in Charlottesville.

### U.S. says some remains of sailors found on USS John McCain

SINGAPORE (AP) — Navy divers searching a flooded compartment of the USS John S. McCain found remains of some of the 10 sailors missing in a collision between the warship and an oil tanker, the U.S. Pacific Fleet commander said Tuesday as he promised a full investigation.

Adm. Scott Swift also said at a news conference in Singapore, where the McCain is now docked, that Malaysian officials had found one body, but it had yet to be identified and it was unknown whether it was a crew member.

The collision before dawn on Monday near Singapore tore a gaping hole in the McCain's left rear hull and flooded adjacent compartments including crew berths and machinery and communication rooms. Five sailors were injured.

Swift would not say where in the destroyer the bodies were found.

### Eclipse crowds may have doubled Wyoming's population

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — The least populated state in the nation has seen total eclipses before but likely never as many people.

The amount of traffic during Monday's eclipse suggests Wyoming may have temporarily doubled its population of 585,000 — as some predicted it would.

The Wyoming Department of Transportation counted 536,000 more vehicles than usual on Wyoming's roads and highways — a 68 percent increase.

"I have no doubt that we had hundreds of thousands of visitors," department spokesman Doug McGea said Tuesday. "I would guess that yesterday was the most people that ever have been in Wyoming at one time."

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