

The Importance of U.S. Troops in Afghanistan

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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From my standpoint as U.S. ambassador in Iraq when we had to operate post-2011 without the presence of U.S. troops, I know that the Nov. 27 editorial "[Getting to 'yes' with Afghanistan](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/us-and-afghanistan-need-to-work-together-to-reach-deal-on-forces/2013/11/26/4fc24318-56ca-11e3-ba82-16ed03681809_story.html) (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/us-and-afghanistan-need-to-work-together-to-reach-deal-on-forces/2013/11/26/4fc24318-56ca-11e3-ba82-16ed03681809_story.html), " on the need for a post-2014 U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan, was on target.

The editorial accurately said that some in the White House were happy to see troops out of Iraq; however, President Obama supported reversing the agreement to withdraw troops -- an agreement made with Iraq in 2008. The effort foundered, however, on the inability of the Iraqi political system to support legal immunity for U.S. forces. Much of our difficulty since 2011 in delivering sufficient counterterrorism assistance to the now-hard-pressed Iraqis flows from the absence of U.S. troops.

However limited in number or missions, any troop presence mobilizes Washington to support security partners in ways not possible when only a diplomatic presence is fielded. We should not have to learn this lesson again in Afghanistan. ❖

Washington Post

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